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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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Monday 23 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Wind Power

1. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current status of the LS1 wind turbine at Burgar Hill on Orkney.

15. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of applications of which he is aware for the building of commercial electricity-generating windmills within the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I visited Burgar Hill on Orkney on 10 November to inaugurate the experimental 3 MW 60 m diameter wind turbine generator. Following commissioning, the machine will undergo a comprehensive two-year monitoring programme.

I am aware of no outstanding applications for commercial electricity-generating windmills, but wind-powered generators have been built or are being built at Carmarthen Bay, Richborough and Ilfracombe, in addition to that at Orkney.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Can he give the House any idea of how much will be invested, and whether his Department has any plans for developing the technology of this highly efficient, or at least highly attractive, and renewable form of energy?

Mr. Parkinson: To date the Department has invested about £22 million since 1979 in exploring the potential of electricity generation from wind. At present we are spending about £4 million a year. We consider that there is good economic potential in the technology, and we intend to continue to support the work.

Dr. Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that wind power has a significant part to play in generating electricity, particularly in remote areas, and that the technology can also be very useful to the Third world? Does he, however, concede that it is unlikely that it will ever play a significant role in this country, and that it is therefore essential that we continue to invest in nuclear and coal-fired stations?

Mr. Parkinson: I agree with my hon. Friend. I cannot see the day when we shall be generating large quantities of electricity from wind. The wind generator in Orkney, which I mentioned, is higher than Nelson's column, and the sail is about 65 m across. About 150 of those would be required to replace the power produced by a medium-sized 500 MW coal-fired station, and a good deal of space would be needed. I believe that there is potential in the technology, but I do not think that huge quantities of our electricity will come from it.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the Secretary of State will acknowledge the valuable work done by the wind energy group, and also by James Howden. Both have pioneered developments in wind power.

Does the Secretary of State agree that there is considerable export potential, but that it would be much better to carry out a good deal of the development in the United Kingdom than, for instance, to take experiments to the United States? Does the right hon. Gentleman foresee any need to change the terms of the Energy Act 1983 to make it a more attractive proposition for small-scale private owners of wind generators to gain some advantage from the generating boards?

Mr. Parkinson: The generator that I mentioned is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I know that he shares my enthusiasm for the project. The working of the 1983 Act has been a disappointment. The principal problem is gaining access to the grid on the right terms. The matter is raised regularly by independent producers.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Has the specification of any of the wind generators on order for my right hon. Friend's Department had to be altered after the velocity of the recent disastrous gales? Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that some of the coldest weather in the United Kingdom occurs when an anti-cyclone is sitting over the United Kingdom and there is zero air flow?

Mr. Parkinson: There are problems with wind generators. However, the people in Orkney tell me that 100 mph winds are not uncommon. Indeed, winds faster than that occurred three times last winter. The generator has been designed to take tremendous strains.

Mr. Eadie: People in the area, and many hon. Members, welcome the fact that the right hon. Gentleman saw fit to be identified with the project by opening it and also to be associated with the consortium of GEC, British Aerospace and Taylor Woodrow. Does he think that he should underline the fact that the expenditure of £12 million was made entirely by his Department and by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that people want to know where all this footloose capital is going to? People have prayer mats in their inside pockets regarding privatisation. Why are they not investing in energy if they are so enthusiastic about it?

Mr. Parkinson: One of the reasons why there is a problem about investment in energy is the very low rate of return that is on offer to those who put up the capital, because of the price that they get for their electricity when they feed it into the grid. That is one of the biggest obstacles to proper investment in energy, and it is one of the reasons why, as I explained to the House the other day, we need to improve the rate of return in the electricity supply industry.

Natural Gas Reserves

2. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the total reserves of natural gas in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Vale of Pickering.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): We estimate that the United Kingdom has in the region of 47 trillion cu ft of remaining recoverable gas reserves in existing discoveries. Reserves in the Vale of Pickering are still being assessed by the licensees.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware of the widespread alarm throughout Ryedale at the prospect of the construction of a gas processing plant in the Vale of Pickering, which, it is felt, would cause serious damage to the area's agriculture, tourism and race horse training industries? Is he further aware that the local community is not convinced that either the quantity or the quality of these gas discoveries warrants such harmful destruction to the local economy and to the rural environment? Will he do everything in his power to urge Taylor Woodrow Energy Ltd. to publish details of these gas discoveries before the county council reaches its final planning decision?

Mr. Morrison: I am aware of the concern that has been expressed in the Vale of Pickering about the discovery of gas there, not least because my hon. Friend has made me aware of that fact. I can assure my hon. Friend that the development plans will have to pass through the local authority planning procedures and that they will also have to go before the Health and Safety Executive and my Department. All the matters about which both he and his constituents are concerned will be taken seriously into account.

Coal-fired Power Stations

4. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the timing of the orders for two coal-fired power stations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The timing of orders for new power stations is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. Applications to build these stations have not yet been submitted. Each application will be considered on its merits when it is received.

Mr. Brown: Is it true that heads of agreement have already been signed between the board and private consortia for the purchase of non-nuclear power stations? Do the Government intend to build the two new coal-fired power stations with private capital?

Mr. Spicer: I am not aware of anything having been done along the lines suggested by the hon. Gentleman in the first part of his question.

As for the second part of his question, the Government always welcome the involvement of private capital.

Mr. Andy Stewart: As Nottinghamshire already has a site for a new coal-fired power station, and as it produces the cheapest coal in Britain, will my hon. Friend tell the House that he will guarantee that the CEGB will place the first of the two coal-fired power stations in Nottinghamshire?

Mr. Spicer: As my right hon. Friend has a duty to take a judicial view about applications when they are made, I cannot anticipate the exact details of what will come forward and what our reaction will be to them.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Secretary of State aware that the lack of investment in coal mines, which obviously has something to do with the question of new power stations — *[Interruption.]* New power stations will need coal, and it is the lack of investment in coal mines that has led to the proposed closure of Huwood Engineering in Gateshead, with the loss of 600 jobs. What does the Minister intend to do about the critical situation that is facing Huwood in Gateshead, which makes nonsense of the Government's so-called concern about unemployment and industrial growth?

Mr. Spicer: As the Government are allowing £2 million a working day to be invested in the coal mining industry, I imagine that is one of the reasons why the Opposition did not want to debate that issue on Friday last.

Mr. Holt: When my hon. Friend considers the proposition, will he recognise that it is not necessary to

build the power stations near coal mines? They should be built at ports such as Teesside, so that the imported coal, which is so much cheaper, will provide cheaper electricity at the seaside.

Mr. Spicer: As my hon. Friend is aware, the current level of imports is very low. We have every confidence that a fully competitive British coal industry will be able to supply a very large part of the future industrial demands of the electricity industry.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister guarantee that the Government will ensure as far as possible that the two new coal-fired power stations will use British deep-mined coal? If there is a problem about the price, perhaps he can use the formula that assists the farming industry, which is subsidised to the tune of £11·50 a week for every family in Britain. If we did that, we would have the cheapest coal in the world.

Mr. Spicer: The Government are doing everything in their power to encourage the development of a highly profitable British coal industry. If that is successful, British coal will dominate the coal industry in this country. I only hope that the hon. Gentleman will support us in our effort to get a thoroughly competitive British coal industry.

Mr. Rost: My hon. Friend said that he would consider projects on their merits. Did he mean by that that the CEGB will be expected to raise money at commercial rates of interest, and to produce a commercial rate of return, just as he expects the private sector to do when it has to compete with the CEGB?

Mr. Spicer: The public sector is required to make rates of return on new investment of at least 5 per cent. That is the position in the public sector.

Mr. Eadie: Does the Minister agree that the power plant industry would welcome any expedition in the building of power stations? What about the publicity regarding Fawley, which, we understand, is to have a super design to cater for foreign coal imports? Are the Government backing a signal that British miners, despite the praise that they receive for further Herculean efforts in increasing coal production, are about to be betrayed once again?

Mr. Spicer: The Government have not even received the application for Fawley, and therefore it is impossible for me to give the hon. Gentleman any idea of the Government's reaction. The CEGB has said that it will produce proposals, and it will do that in its own time. We will have to take a view on the matter once the CEGB has produced its proposals.

Electricity Costs

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how comparable costs of electricity affect the competitiveness of British industry vis-à-vis other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Parkinson: Electricity accounts for only a small fraction — less than 2 per cent. on average — of industries' total production costs. It therefore has a limited effect on most industries' competitiveness. Large industrial users, for whom electricity may comprise a greater than average share of total costs, pay electricity prices which are amongst the lowest in Europe.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that for large users of electricity costs in the United Kingdom are lower than in any other major Community country? Is it not time that the CBI stopped whingeing about electricity prices and congratulated the Government on this happy state of affairs instead?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend has made a very strong point. Our electricity prices are extremely competitive, and both the industry and the electricity suppliers agree with that. They account for about 2 per cent. on average of our costs. Therefore, next year's increases affect one sixth of 1 per cent. of industry's costs. Of course, industry does not like rising costs, but it overstates its case.

Mr. Madden: Were not the dismay and the astonishment expressed by industry when the Secretary of State announced a monster increase in electricity prices for next year and an increase well above inflation for the year after a sign of the considerable difficulties that that will impose? Does he not recognise that industries, such as the textile industry, which use a very substantial amount of electricity, accept that that will be a substantial additional on-cost? That is a kick in the teeth for the British textile industry, which plays a major and important role in trying to reverse decline in a number of important regions in this country.

Mr. Parkinson: I repeat that, even after the increase, our prices will be extremely competitive compared with those of many other major countries. For instance, they will be about half those set by Japan, and nobody has complained that Japan is uncompetitive in its electricity prices. Nobody likes increases. I explained in my statement why they are necessary.

It might interest the hon. Gentleman to know that at a subsequent meeting with CBI representatives, following their initial reaction, they left my Department saying that they were reassured.

Mr. Hannam: Is it not a fact that under a Conservative Government electricity prices to industry once again became competitive with European countries? In the five and a half years of the Labour Government industrial electricity prices went up by over 116 per cent., whereas under the Conservative Government prices went up by only 56 per cent. Will my right hon. Friend reassure British industry that this will continue and that electricity costs will remain competitive?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is incorrect in one small item. Electricity prices to industry went up by 56 per cent. in eight and a half years under this Government and by 116 per cent. in five and a half years under the Labour Government. The Labour Government's record was abysmal. Labour Members are the least qualified in the world to start shouting.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Minister accept that on the day that he announced increases in electricity costs for industry — to which industry reacted badly — the Chancellor of the Exchequer was downgrading his estimates of economic growth, which was cited as the reason why the industry would have to expand and the rates of return would have to increase? Is the Department now reviewing estimates of the need for those increases?

Mr. Parkinson: I realise that for members of the Liberal party 24 hours is a long time in politics. We are talking about an investment programme for the next 12 years. The

events of one day do not change fundamentals, such as the capacity gap and the need for more capacity over the next 12 years. The hon. Gentleman will certainly not be here to be interested by then.

Mr. Moss: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that industrial electricity prices in this country are about half those in West Germany and substantially below those in the rest of the EEC?

Mr. Parkinson: Our prices are extremely competitive. I heard somebody on the radio comparing our prices with those in Belgium. He said that after the first increase they would be slightly higher than in Belgium. I wondered why he did not mention any other major country. The reason is that our prices will be lower than those in almost every other major country.

Mr. John Garrett: Is the Minister aware of a study by Price Waterhouse and the Electricty Council which shows that prices of electricity to industry will rise by more than 20 per cent. because the financial targets set by the Treasury do not take bulk discounts into account? Is that true, and is it a case of the Treasury putting one over on him? If so, what will be the effect on industrial costs?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman is mixing up a number of matters. The Price Waterhouse report was commissioned to study the make-up and the working of the bulk supply tariff under the last price regime. It had nothing to do with the price increases which I announced the other day. I have not seen a copy of that report. It has not been submitted to the Department, so I have no idea of its contents.

Combined Heat and Power

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the priority given by the Central Electricity Generating Board to studying the relative merits of combined heat and power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The board tells me that it gives high priority to studying the relative merits of combined heat and power stations compared with other forms of generation.

Mr. Colvin: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the CEGB considered all the alternatives, such as combined heat and power and the Severn barrage, before deciding to submit plans for a new coal-fired power station at Fawley? Has he considered whether it might be wiser to leave decisions on new power generation to the market and to postpone all decisions on new power stations until the industry has been privatised?

Mr. Spicer: We certainly intend a privatised industry to take greater account of market forces. To that extent, I agree with my hon. Friend. The CEGB and ourselves are currently involved in spending money on assessing both the Severn barrage and combined heat and power schemes. In the meantime, the industry believes that it has severe capacity requirements in southern England, and it will therefore be making applications to meet them.

Mr. Ron Brown: As Edinburgh is a so-called key city for combined heat and power, will the Minister meet councillors, trade union representatives and members of the local community to discuss the matter? Bearing in mind the importance of jobs for Edinburgh—a city that suffers from mass unemployment — will the Minister come along to discuss the matter, or must we wait until the private sector picks up the tab and organises things in its usual haphazard way?

Mr. Spicer: I disagree entirely with the hon. Gentleman's last point. We are currently spending £250,000 on assessing the Edinburgh scheme. I shall certainly be happy to meet and discuss the matter with anyone who wishes to take part in a delegation.

Sizewell B

8. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current estimate of the cost of Sizewell B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total cost at 1987 prices is £1·7 billion, including the simulation and visitors' centre and the charge for initial fuel.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the massive sum to be spent on this very dangerous process, which was reported on after the Chernobyl accident, the source of the increased prices of between 8 and 9 per cent. recently forced on the Central Electricity Generating Board by the Government? Does that not mean that the weakest members of our society —pensioners, single-parent families and others in receipt of low incomes — are having to bear the cost of the Government's vendetta against the miners, who can produce cheap coal for our power stations?

Mr. Spicer: I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. One of the requirements of the people whom the hon. Gentleman mentions is electricity, and one of the Government's objectives is to ensure that the electricity capacity exists to meet that requirement.

On conventional power stations, the latest construction cost figure, which includes the cost of desulphurisation plants for the coal industry, is very nearly £1·5 billion, so the figures are pretty much comparable.

Mr. Stern: Will my hon. Friend remind the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) which component of the electricity industry has the better safety record—the coal sector or the nuclear sector?

Mr. Spicer: It is a sad feature of the coal industry that it still has a great many casualties and fatalities, although the number is falling. Of course, those figures do not apply to the nuclear industry. Therefore, the implication of my hon. Friend's question is correct.

Mr. Jack Thompson: In view of the proposals to privatise the electricity industry and the apparent strong resistance on the part of any potential purchasers to buy nuclear stations, will not the Sizewell B proposal become a huge white elephant?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman makes various assumptions about the structure of the industry and people's willingness to buy. Private industry is deeply and positively involved in investment in the nuclear industry in several countries of the world.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that investment in Sizewell B at the price that he has given is a remarkable bargain, as Sizewell, along with other stations, will provide a cheap, reliable and clean source of energy for the future?

Will he give weight to Opposition Members' representations on behalf of the coal industry in proportion to those Labour Members — four — who turned up to vote on Friday after a key debate on the coal industry?

Mr. Spicer: I can only say yes to my hon. Friend. There is no question but that, in relation to base load supply, the nuclear industry provides cheaper electricity.

Dr. Thomas: In view of the figures that the Minister gave relating to the cost of Sizewell B, what is the realistic possibility of the Government's responding to requests from the CEGB to build a further series of PWR stations to replace the existing Magnox stations?

Mr. Spicer: We understand that the board proposes a further five PWR stations. We shall have to take the proposals on their merits when they are put to us. There may well be public inquiries if objections arise, so I cannot prejudge our final decision.

Mr. Prescott: Can the Minister confirm the view put forward by the Secretary of State at the recent privatisation conference that he is actively considering imposing on the industry a requirement for a 25 per cent. nuclear capacity? Is not the Secretary of State flying in the face of market decision-making and the Government's policy of non-interference, on which the Government have rested their case for privatisation of the electricity supply? Does this not confirm the Opposition's view that there is a necessity for an energy policy, whereby the Governments must interfere and that the market cannot solve these problems on its own?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is right to the extent that the Government are committed — I think that the Conservative party is the only party represented in the House that is so committed — to the future of the nuclear industry. We are determined that that future will be in a private industry. Exactly how that is brought about depends on the structure of the industry, when we announce it.

Pit Closures, Nottingham

10. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he had with the chairman of British Coal at its meeting about further proposed pit closures in Nottinghamshire over the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The closure of individual collieries is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. The chairman does, of course, keep me closely informed of his decisions.

Mr. Allen: Is the Secretary of State aware that Nottingham is a city built on pits, but that there are no pits in my constituency or in the city as a whole? Miners from Nottingham now have to travel to Nottinghamshire. Will the right hon. Gentleman reassure them that there will be no further pit closures in Linby, Clipstone or any of the other pits in the shire? These closures are a social consequence of the Government's policies, not something that can be referred to the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot give him that assurance. As he knows, Linby is under review at the moment. The hon. Gentleman talks as though only Conservative Governments have presided over pit closures, whereas since 1964 70 per cent. of all pit closures have taken place under Labour Governments and 30 per cent. under Conservative Governments. The Labour Government have a much better record as pit closers than we have.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: There is no one who underestimates the social consequences of pit closures, but does my right hon. Friend agree that the coalfields of Nottinghamshire and north-east Leicestershire are some of the finest and most profitable in the country and that what happens there in terms of coal and jobs is for the future and not that with which the hon. Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) dealt, which relates to the past?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right. The Government have a strong commitment to a British coal industry. We are proving that commitment by putting up taxpayers' money in large quantities to produce a modern, efficient British coal industry. I see no reason why, if men and management work together and make the best of the new investment, British Coal should not have a bright future.

Mr. Allen McKay: The Secretary of State talks about an efficient, modern and viable coal industry, but can he say how many pits and how many men?

Mr. Parkinson: No, because I do not run British Coal. I make sure that it has good management and that that management has the financial backing that it needs. It gets that backing from the Government.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to review the fact that in Gedling, a neighbouring colliery to Linby, there has been a productivity increase in the past year of nearly 30 per cent.? That is the way to preserve the future of the industry. It is not a matter of keeping open uneconomic or exhausted pits.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend. The improvement in the performance of the British coal industry has been extremely impressive. That is a result of men and management working together. If that can be extended and modern working practices can be brought in, the industry has a very bright future.

Standing Charges

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further representations he has received seeking the abolition of standing charges on electricity and gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have received several representations on this subject. Standing charges are for the industries to determine and, in the case of gas, are subject to that industry's regulatory framework.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend take into account the extreme pressure of standing charges on pensioners, especially on low consumers of gas and electricity? Will he find out what he can do to persuade both industries to abandon or diminish standing charges, for pensioners at least?

Mr. Morrison: Like my hon. Friend, I am concerned about the bill that pensioners have to face. To abolish standing charges completely would cost the industries some £1·1 billion per annum, which would mean increases

in the price of electricity and gas of about 15 per cent. On that basis, some 2 million pensioner households would be likely to pay more.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister will be aware that when his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the increase in electricity prices he omitted to mention standing charges. In fact, his right hon. Friend and I fell out on that question. Ministers on the Treasury Bench do not seem to realise that if electricity prices are increased standing charges increase automatically. It is high time that standing charges were abolished.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman is no doubt aware of the same figures as I am, that during the past five years standing charges for electricity have decreased by about 10 per cent. in real terms and those for gas have decreased by 25 per cent. in real terms. That has been of benefit to the very people about whom he and I are concerned.

Electricity (Nuclear Generation)

13. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of electricity will be generated by nuclear means by 2000 on present projections.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On the basis of present plans, the industry projects that nuclear will comprise almost 20 per cent. of electricity generating capacity in the year 2000.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a small proportion, bearing in mind the conclusion of the Layfield report, which showed that modern nuclear power stations had considerable cost advantages over coal-fired power stations, even assuming that coal could be bought in at world prices? When he designs his measures to denationalise the electricity industry, will he do it in such a way as not to prejudice the expansion of the nuclear power industry?

Mr. Spicer: It is certainly true that on the latest figures, on 1987 prices, Hinkley Point generates electricity at 2·82p per kilowatt hour, whereas the latest Drax figures are 3·03 per kilowatt hour. As I have already told the House, we shall ensure that the nuclear industry has a thriving place in the privatised industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister congratulate the former Labour Government on bringing in the Thorp project and announcing the original order for the reprocessing of nuclear fuel in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister give me an assurance that insofar as the contracts for reprocessing for foreign countries provide for the return of nuclear materials to those countries, no unreasonable obstruction is put before British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. in the exercise of those contracts, which are important money-makers for the county of Cumbria?

Mr. Spicer: I have no hesitation in answering yes to both those questions. The only qualification that I would make is to ask the hon. Gentleman whether his other hon. Friends would likewise congratulate the previous Labour Government on their decisions.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that nearly two thirds of France's electricity is now generated by nuclear power stations? Does he notice any inconsistency in the suggestion of the Liberal party that we should buy our surplus electricity needs from France when coupled with that party's call for the phasing out of all nuclear power stations?

Mr. Spicer: There is certainly an inconsistency in that. When 1992 comes, the fact that the French are producing electricity so cheaply through nuclear power will cause other countries in Europe, especially West Germany, to worry about the importation of cheap French nuclear-generated electricity.

Mr. John Garrett: What does the Minister say to the International Energy Agency's statement that Britain has no energy policy, and to its observation that the Government steadfastly refuse to forecast their use of nuclear power?

Mr. Spicer: The Government certainly do have an energy policy, and we shall spell it out in the months to come. I have already said that the Government are committed to the future of the nuclear industry and have today given the figure of 20 per cent. for the industry's forecast. That remains the Government's position.

Electricity Industry

16. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board he will raise with him proposals for reducing manning levels in the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: As I said in my statement on 3 November, the Government expect the industry to consider carefully the scope for improving the rate of return through increased cost efficiency.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is difficult to judge the performance of a domestic monopoly without figures comparing it with like countries, such as those in the EEC? When he next meets Lord Marshall, will he ask him to provide such figures?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I will.

18. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he had with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board about the financial target for the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board frequently to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Pike: Is the chairman of the CEGB happy with the financial policies being forced on the board by the Government and the resulting massive price increases for domestic and industrial consumers, which will cause considerable problems for many manufacturing industries?

Mr. Parkinson: The chairman of the CEGB has confirmed that he accepts my argument that the rate of return needs to be improved. He argues that it could be improved a little more slowly, but he accepts that it must be improved if we are to attract investment and achieve diversity in generation.

Mr. Michael Morris: My right hon. Friend has rightly stated that the rate of return must be improved. Will he clarify the statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland suggesting that in Scotland 2·7 per cent. seems to be acceptable?

Mr. Parkinson: The reason for that is precisely the reason why our rate of return has been so low. Scotland has very substantial surplus capacity. We have just come through a period of substantial surplus capacity. That is now disappearing and we are about to embark on a huge investment programme. In Scotland, the investment has been made and there is a surplus. That is why the rate of return is lower.

THE ARTS

National Museum of Photography

67. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for Arts whether he plans to visit the national museum of photography in the next three months.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I have no such plans, although I enjoyed my visit to the museum in September last year.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Minister agree that the museum in Bradford is a highly successful centre of excellence for photography? Is he aware that it is expected to attract a million visitors next year, making it the most successful museum outside London? During his visit, however, he will have become aware of the desperate need for capital investment, which has not been forthcoming from the private sector. Will he make Government funds available urgently for maintenance and further development at Bradford?

Mr. Luce: First, I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the lead that he takes in matters of photography and on the exhibition of hon. Members' photography that he is arranging from next Monday, which I hope will live up to his expectations and standards.

The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that the number of visitors to the national museum of photography is rising rapidly. In 1986 there was an increase of 24 per cent. on the previous year, and I hope that that trend will continue. With regard to investment, I have already announced that in my three-year funding proposals there will be a 16 per cent. increase over three years in funding for museums and galleries. A large proportion of that funding will be earmarked for building and maintenance purposes.

Museums, Nottingham

68. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit museums in Nottingham in 1988.

Mr. Luce: My programme of visits for 1988 has not yet been arranged, but I enjoyed my visit to Nottingham in 1986.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister ask his colleagues dealing with the Local Government Bill to ensure that there is no further privatisation of leisure services, so that there are no more madcap schemes of the kind proposed by the Tory-controlled Nottingham city council for the historic Castle museum? Is the Minister aware that the council wishes to put plastic battlements and fibreglass turrets on that historic building and to have a lift in the form of a medieval tent going up and down the famous Castle rock? Will he ensure that that kind of Philistine approach is not encouraged by his colleagues dealing with the Local Government Bill?

Mr. Luce: I have a feeling that it would be wise for me to leave decisions about such activities to the local authorities concerned. I have visited the excellent Castle museum in Nottingham, but the question of leisure centres is a matter for local authorities.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my right hon. Friend share my sadness that he will not reach Question 105, when I would have drawn his attention to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please do not. We are dealing with this question.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that had he come to Nottingham, he would have seen the Playhouse, the theatre and the magnificent concert hall, to which touring companies and exhibitions ought to be sent?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend encourages me so much that I shall now make plans to visit Nottingham again.

Mr. Fisher: While welcoming the Minister's achievement of three-year funding, may I ask him to explain to the House why museums in the regions of Britain, such as those in Nottingham, have been so unfavourably treated in his announcement? Once again he appears to be ignoring the 1984 Museums and Galleries Commission report, which suggests that area museums should have their budgets doubled by 1990. Once again he seems not to appreciate the important educational and economic roles of museums in developing tourism in the regions. Why are area museums such as those in Nottingham ignored in his policy?

Mr. Luce: It seems that once again the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. The planned projection of increase in the rate support grant for local museums will go up by 15 per cent. in the next three years. The money made available to the Museums and Galleries Commission will go up by 11·5 per cent. in the next three years, a little above the projected rate of inflation. It is for the Museums and Galleries Commission to decide how to disburse it to the area museum councils. However, the grant to the area museum councils has increased in real terms by more than 9 per cent. since 1979. That is not a bad record.

Mr. Jessel: Will my right hon. Friend invite the museums in Nottingham to consider the excellent settlement that he has obtained, which has increased arts funding for the next three years to 17 per cent., which will do much to boost the arts as a source of national strength, and which has confounded his critics and shown the Conservative party to be the party which really cares about the arts?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said and very encouraged by it. There is no doubt that three-year funding gives arts organisations the time for planning their dispositions and financial arrangements in the long term. What needs to be remembered is that the basic objective behind this policy is to encourage organisations that now depend on taxpayers' money to become more self-reliant. That is why I have earmarked a sum of money for incentive funding, which will help them to achieve that objective.

Scottish Arts Council

69. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Minister for Arts whether he has had any representations made to him about the future organisational structure of the Scottish Arts Council.

Mr. Luce: I have received a small number of representations on this matter.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister aware of the representations being made to the effect that the Scottish Film Council should be brought under the Scottish Arts Council? Will he please resist the anomalous situation which would bring the Scottish Film Council under the bailiwick of the Minister instead of the Scottish Arts Council? Has the time not come to solve that ridiculous anomaly by devolving the Scottish Arts Council, so that we can be responsible for developing our own culture away from the rather bad habits in the arts policy offered by the Minister?

Mr. Luce: I should have thought that the announcement, two or three weeks ago, of a budget increase of 17 per cent. in the next three years would be a source of great encouragement to the people of Scotland. I have no intention of changing the present arrangements. The Scottish Arts Council has a large degree of autonomy, and under the present financial arrangements receives more than 12 per cent. of the total sum available to the Arts Council of Great Britain, although it has only 9 per cent. of the population of Great Britain. That is not a bad bargain per capita.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister accept that there is a parallel in the way that sport is treated in Scotland? There is an independent Scottish Sports Council with its own royal charter. Can we have the same for the Scottish Arts Council?

Mr. Luce: The present arrangements are working well in Scotland, and the latest settlement should be a source of encouragement. It makes sense to have a framework for the arts policy for the United Kingdom. It is right that there should be a high degree of autonomy for the Scottish Arts Council. That is how it works. It is healthy for the policy for Great Britain that the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council should be on the main board of the British Arts Council, so that he can influence the formulation of policy.

Elgin Marbles

70. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the return of the Elgin marbles to Greece.

Mr. Luce: It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government that the Elgin marbles were legally obtained and that they should remain in the British museum, whose trustees consider it in the general interest to maintain the integrity of the museum's collections for the benefit of international scholarship and the enjoyment of the general public.

Mr. Baker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that to return the marbles would be a dagger blow between the shoulder blades of those who have benefited from a classical education and those who will do so in future? Is he further aware that the Greek Government could not put the marbles on the Parthenon and that they would be stored in a museum? Would not returning them lead to an international cry for the return of such treasures from museums throughout the world?

Mr. Luce: I agree with all my hon. Friend's points. The fact is that the marbles were legally acquired for this nation. It is interesting that there are no fewer than six other capitals in Western Europe that possess some of the Parthenon sculptures. We have about 50 per cent. They were legally acquired and it is right to retain them.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the Minister accept that there are many people in this country, and certainly in Greece, who believe that the Elgin marbles were stolen from Greece? The legal interpretation of this country is very much in dispute. Does he further accept that it would do a great deal to encourage friendship between our two countries if Britain returned the marbles to Greece—in much the same way as Venice has asked for the bones of Casanova to be returned?

Mr. Luce: I have considerable sympathy with those who say that if we start down that road there will no end to the number of objects of art in this country that we would have to return. I do not think that that would make sense.

CIVIL SERVICE

Secondments

110. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further steps he is taking to encourage exchanges between industry and the Civil Service.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The Government take every opportunity to encourage secondments between the Civil Service and industry and commerce. A new promotional leaflet has been prepared to help stimulate further interest. A copy has been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that progress in this matter has been lamentably slow? Will he assure the House that he will launch a drive to restore some vigour into the administration of the Civil Service for the betterment of all those clever people who work in it and who would greatly benefit from a spell in the private sector?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the matter. However, in 1986 as compared with 1985 there was an increase in outward secondments of 22 per cent. and in inward secondments of 20 per cent. I do not think that that is bad. I am having discussions with other Departments, at official level, to assess the sort of target that we should establish in both directions to achieve a much higher level. I agree with my hon. Friend on the reasons for secondment.

Dr. Marek: When carrying out that policy, how will the Minister take account of the generally low pay in the Civil Service compared with the high pay in industry?

Mr. Luce: That point is taken into account in our arrangements. Those seconded into the Civil Service are paid the Civil Service salary, and, if necessary, it is topped up by their employers. People on outward secondment to industry are paid the standard Civil Service salary.

111. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the numbers of civil servants seconded to industry in the current year.

Mr. Luce: The figure for 1987 will be available in the spring. In 1986 there were 280 civil servants on secondment to industry and commerce, over a fifth more than in 1985.

Mr. Marshall: How many secondments into the Civil Service take place in grade 5 and above?

Mr. Luce: I cannot give the figure for inward secondment, but for outward secondment it is 55 for grade 5 and above. My view is that the most important area is the middle management level of the Civil Service, where the greatest benefit of secondment can be obtained.

Mr. Cryer: Can the Minister explain what safeguards exist in respect of seconding one way and the other? There is a history of civil servants not keeping the private sector at arm's length when dealing with, for example, grant arrangements. Is he aware, further, that on retirement at a very early age, and on very substantial pensions, senior civil servants seem to have a habit of landing boardroom jobs at very high salaries? What guarantee is there that this form of corruption will not be encouraged and developed by such secondment?

Mr. Luce: It is outrageous that the hon. Gentleman should suggest that this is a form of corruption. Very tight procedures apply to people taking up outside jobs once they have retired from the service. If the hon. Gentleman has not heard of it, there is an organisation called the Diamond committee, which considers these matters carefully to ensure that there is no serious conflict of interests. When secondments are arranged for existing civil servants, there are clear safeguards with regard to conflict of interests.

Mr. Stokes: I know how hard my right hon. Friend and his Department are trying in regard to this matter, but is he aware that, among the many Government Departments, the Treasury probably contains the greatest concentration of brains, but the least amount of practical experience of life, particularly life in industry?

Mr. Luce: I shall not comment in detail on that, but a number of Treasury officials are being seconded elsewhere, and that is a process that I wish to encourage.

Mr. Skinner: Perhaps the Minister could shed some light on the matter concerning Sir Robert Armstrong—who has not yet been seconded to outside industry, but probably has something in mind — regarding the approaches that he made to senior members of the Government in respect of Mark Thatcher and his involvement with the company Electronic Data Systems and contracts in Britain.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the secondment of civil servants.

Civil Service College

112. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last paid a visit to the Civil Service college.

Mr. Luce: On 9 November 1987.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Civil Service needs cultural change, although things are moving in the right direction? Would the Civil Service college benefit from much closer involvement with the private sector?

Mr. Luce: Yes, Sir. It is right that there should be close involvement, and over 60 per cent. of staff who teach at the Civil Service college are from the private sector or from outside the Civil Service. That is a process that I wish to encourage. On the question of the number of courses, including the top management course, a considerable number of private sector people attend that course and the two-way flow is of enormous benefit to the college.

Mr. Haynes: When the Minister visits this college, does he have a word with the students? Does he warn them that, since 1979, the Civil Service Minister has come to the Dispatch Box and bragged about how many civil servants have lost their jobs, and does he warn them about the possibility that, when they are qualified, they might join the dole queue?

Mr. Luce: I go down to the college regularly and sometimes I even sit in on the sessions. The standard of professionalism in our service is as high as any service in the world, but we were right in 1979 to set a target to reduce the size of the Civil Service, which we have done to the tune of 130,000, because it was too large. As a Government who have been reducing the activities of central Government, it is only right that we should have a slimmed down but highly professional service.

THE ARTS

Arts Council

73. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council and what matters were discussed.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I met the chairman on 16 November. We discussed the Arts Council's plans for the next three years, and other matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Gregory: Was the chairman of the Arts Council pleased with the quite remarkable increase of some 17 per cent. in funding for the next three years?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Since 1979 the council has seen an increase in real terms of 8 per cent. We are planning an increase in the next three years of just under 16 per cent., which gives it great scope to plan its budget in the long term and ensure that its clients move towards a greater degree of self-reliance, which is my overall objective.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister confirm that once all the sums in his settlement for earmarking have been deducted, the actual budget settlement for regional arts associations will be no better than level with the rate of inflation? Will he make that clear, and will he put that together with the cut in real terms that the regional arts associations took last year and recognise that what he has said today is nonsense?

Mr. Luce: Earlier on I thought that the hon. Gentleman was pleased with the outcome of the settlement. He must make up his mind. The amount of money that will be disbursed to the regional arts associations will be decided by the Arts Council before the beginning of the coming

financial year. It is silly to isolate sums of money and say that they are not relevant, because incentive funding will be relevant, not just for the work of the Arts Council, but for the work of the regional arts associations as well. It is my objective that small arts organisations should gain from the settlement, as much as the bigger and medium-sized organisations.

North Tees General Hospital

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of beds and the reduction of theatre sessions at North Tees general hospital in the constituency of Stockton, North."

The matter is specific in that it relates to the fact that at the weekend the hospital was unable to make provision for emergency admission to the elderly care wards. A total of 92 beds are to be closed before 1 December. Of these, 48 beds are in the two elderly care wards, which would mean a 25 per cent. closure in that unit, and 44 are surgical beds. It means the removal of one theatre session per day from the surgery unit at the hospital. All that is due to what is described as a "crisis". The crisis is a combination of no cash for recruiting badly needed nurses, and high sickness levels, which nurses say are related to stress due to under-staffing.

The Government's declared statement of priorities during the election was care of the elderly and a reduction in surgical waiting lists. North Tees general hospital is the only proper source of that sort of provision, not only for my patch, but for other surrounding areas. Therefore, the loss is immediate and significant.

When elderly patients, some disoriented, some doubly incontinent and some very feeble, are decanted into other wards in hospitals, as is proposed, it not only militates against their welfare, but impedes the proper allocation of other badly needed facilities for others in need. If patients attending a consultant are judged to be in need of hospital attention, under the health Acts the health authority is legally and morally bound to make available appropriate provision. What disturbs me, and is important, is that if the steps that I have mentioned are taken that moral and legal and obligation will be breached.

The matter is urgent, because winter is not approaching, but is here. Anyone walking outside today will be aware of that. Where is the compassion that the Government talk about? Where is the care that they say they provide? Where is the cash that they are supposed to have poured into the Health Service since 1979? I challenge any hon. Member to put any hospital he cares to name against the North Tees general hospital and try to prove that it is any more efficient or complies more with the Government's regulations and diktat. North Tees general hospital has done its level best, yet despite that the hospital and the Northern regional health authority are unable to provide for the constituents in my patch because of Government constraints. I demand a debate on that topic today.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has asked for leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of beds and the reduction of theatre sessions at the North Tees general hospital."

I listened with great care to what the hon. Member said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. However, I hope that he will have other opportunities to raise a matter of this kind, perhaps on Thursday.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that there were many stories in the Sunday press and their are some in today's press, regarding Mark Thatcher being involved with Electronic Data Systems——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know about the matter. The hon. Gentleman inappropriately raised it on a question relating to the secondment of civil servants. Mark Thatcher is not a civil servant. Comments in the press are not a matter of order for the House.

Mr. Skinner: The point that I am coming to, Mr. Speaker, is that I was inquiring whether anybody from the Treasury Bench—the Prime Minister or anybody else—had shown that he was prepared to make a statement in the House on the firm that has dealings with the CIA and is anxious to get National Health Service contracts in Britain. It is not what you know, but who you know. We should not have that kind of nepotism bandied about in Britain.

Mr. Speaker: It is patently not a matter of order for me.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a totally different point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a genuine point of order, on which you will wish to give a considered ruling. This week, will you exercise some flexibility in applying the sub judice rule to matters that relate to the Wright case and which may be raised in Parliament? Otherwise, Parliament will be subject to the same restraints as the press. The press is gagged. Surely Parliament should not be gagged.

My point of order relates to section 54(7) of Chapter 6, "Questions to Ministers and other Members" in the "Manual of Procedure in the Public Business". That subsection states:

"A question"—

that is, a parliamentary question—

"seeking information about matters which are in their nature secret may not be asked".

Indeed, on pages 340-43 of "Erskine May" many precedents, going back to the last century, are set out.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that on 16 July I tabled 13 parliamentary questions which were rejected by the Table Office. On appeal to you, you felt that the decision of the Table Office had to be upheld, on the basis that the questions covered matters that were classified and of national security. Indeed, I have your written ruling, which I shall not read to the House, which states that such matters cannot be dealt with because they are matters of national security.

Were the matters about which I tabled questions really classified? I took the material from a book that had been produced by a Mr. Nigel West. I do not criticise that gentleman in any way. He is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Torbay. He wrote an excellent book. He was perfectly entitled to research the matters that he included in the book in the way that he has done, but on pages 229, 247, 252 and 260 he set out in detail those matters which were the subject of questions which I tabled and which the Table Office turned down, and you approved their rejection.

I asked the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) on what basis he was able to gain clearance for his book. He said and he has confirmed it in writing, that the D Notice Committee approved publication of his book. That Committee includes, according to the third report of the Select Committee on Defence, Session 1979-80, on the D Notice system, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence, in the chair, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Home Department, the Second Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and representatives of the press. In other words, principal civil servants directly accountable to Ministers approved the clearance of that book.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Civil servants are not accountable to me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Speaker, civil servants approved the publication of the book and the material in it. In form, that is ministerial approval of the publication of information that is classified, yet, under other rules which Ministers use to refuse to answer questions, Members are prevented from asking questions on those same matters. There is a contradiction. Civil servants, on behalf of Ministers, can approve the publication of classified information by authors, yet at the same time Members of Parliament are prevented from tabling questions on those matters.

Paragraph 9, on page 342 of "Erskine May", headed, "Questions already answered, or to which an answer has been refused, or on secret matters", states:

"Questions are not in order which . . . fall within a class of question which a Minister has refused to answer."

I submit that Ministers have not refused to answer those questions. I say that because the members of the D Notice Committee, who are accountable to Secretaries of State and to Ministers, approved publication, and, therefore, Ministers approved publication. I submit, therefore, that you are no longer bound by the rule that states that you must turn down questions in the event that Ministers refuse to answer.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that you are free of the obstacle placed before you in relation to those questions, because if such questions are cleared on the basis of information that is published in a book that has received ministerial approval, or the approval of senior civil servants, it means that all the information in all books that have been published following approval by civil servants, whether it be the Treasury Solicitor or members of the D Notice Committee, has been freed and can be the subject of questions in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member and the House know that I am bound by our Standing Orders and by the precedents in "Erskine May". The hon. Member put down his questions before the summer recess, and I think he will recollect that I offered him an opportunity to come and see me about them, but he declined to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: There was no need to do it.

Mr. Speaker: That is where the matter now rests.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is of some concern that a foreign firm has made an application to the DHSS to carry out some of its work. You may well say that that is not a matter for the Chair. However, there is considerable public

concern that the foreign firm in question has recently employed a person who is a close relative of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have just dealt with that matter. It is certainly not a matter for the Chair. The hon. Member must know that. There is absolutely nothing that I can say about it. It is patently not a matter of order.

Mr. Winnick: It is about the Register of Members' Interests, and I thought that that would be a matter of concern for the Chair. Obviously, Labour Members would like a statement, and no doubt you would respond by saying that whether a Minister makes a statement on those allegations is not a matter for you. However, it is important that the Register should include details when a close relative is involved in a matter such as this.

I understand that there is no obligation at present for such information to be included in the Register. It is a matter of some public concern and interest, however, if the Prime Minister's son is involved with a foreign company that is trying to undertake some of the work that is presently carried out by a Government Department. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reflect on whether the Register should include such information, not least from the Prime Minister herself.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no need for me to reflect on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). He can himself submit the matter to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. If he does so, the Committee will undoubtedly consider it.

Mr. Cryer: May I seek your guidance on this matter, Mr. Speaker? As I understand it, you have responsibility for the Register, but I realise that the suggestion that Members' relatives should be involved in the Register is a matter for the Select Committee on Procedure and not directly for yourself. However, there is the matter of the rules governing Ministers, and there is a link between the House and Ministers, because Ministers are accountable to the House. When a relative, such as the Prime Minister's son, has been involved in representing a firm that is possibly seeking contracts worth £500 million or more, and in receipt of——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a continuation of a point of order on a matter for which, as the entire House knows, I have no responsibility.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Surely, Mr. Speaker, Opposition Members are entitled to defend their reputations, even if Conservative Members think that this is a jovial occasion. We are talking about matters of great importance. The company involved is already the subject of investigation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will not hear any more points of order on this matter because they raise issues that are patently not for me. They are patently not matters for me, and other methods will have to be found for dealing with them.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was noticeable that you made no ruling in answering my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), and many of us have been extremely worried about the way in which this issue has been conducted in the past.

We recognise the importance of your offer to see my hon. Friend the Member for Workington. That offer was not taken up, for various reasons, and you will recall that there were exchanges about that. That does not involve the rest of us, but there is general concern about the anomaly that arises when a Member of this place can write a book, with assistance and approval, yet when questions on the same subject are tabled they are not accepted, presumably because the same people are advising that the questions should not be answered.

There is one solution, and I believe that we have reached the stage when we should adopt it. I ask you to accept, Mr. Speaker, that the issue be sent to the Procedure Committee, on the basis that it reports back to the House.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) wishes the issue to be dealt with by the Procedure Committee, he should draw it to the Committee's attention. It is a matter for him, not for me.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you agree that it is a contemptible use of our procedure—this is done regularly in the House nowadays—for the Prime Minister's name to be dragged through the mud, quite deliberately, by wicked and false points of order that are a disgrace to the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the same principle must apply to both sides of the House. These are not matters for me, and I have already so ruled.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have ruled already that no matter of order has been raised by hon. Members on either side of the House. I am not prepared——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a debate today that will be taken in Opposition time. I can deal only with points of order that raise issues on which I can rule.

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully when you said that there were other methods that the House could use to raise this issue, and I agree with hon. Members that they are better than someone getting up and wielding the Mace, as we have seen on previous occasions. Will you explain what other methods we could use, so that we may know how to deal with the matter without being out of order?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not for the Chair to advise on tactics. In a previous incarnation I would have been able to tell the hon. Gentleman what to do.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there nothing that you can do to protect the House against the sustained campaign by Labour Members to prevent us yet again from getting on to Scottish business, which Conservative Members are anxious to reach? We have been deprived of Scottish business on several occasions by Labour Members and we are becoming heartily sick of it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already heard the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). There is a great demand to take part in the important debate on the future Government of Scotland.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, I cannot take a point of order on that matter.

Mr. Banks: You do not know what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Member for Workington. I shall take Mr. Tony Banks, on the basis that I have not yet heard his point of order.

Mr. Banks: It is a point of order because it is understood constitutionally, that the role of the legislature, the House of Commons, is to exercise control over the Executive. This is a matter on which, if on nothing else, we are united. What hon. Members are concerned about—it is declared by Labour Members, but Tory Members mutter about it into their beards—is the way in which the Executive, the Civil Service, has been manipulated in an overt political way. We are concerned because it would appear that Sir Robert Armstrong, in his other capacity, has been used to inform the Prime Minister of the role of her son in that company——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I feared that the hon. Gentleman's point of order, although it was a completely different point, might return to that subject. I am sorry that I was unable to call the hon. Gentleman to put a question to the Minister for the Civil Service. I shall bear in mind his undoubted interest in the matter when we next debate the subject.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If it is on the same point, I cannot say any more.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You have not ruled. May I put my point of order?

Mr. Speaker: No. I have heard it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is a matter of great principle.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should not shout at me across the Chamber like that. These questions were tabled before the recess, which is a long time ago. At the time I suggested that the hon. Member should come and see me, and a few moments ago he indicated that that had not been necessary. I do not see what point of order arises now that did not arise then.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The answer is simple. When I was asked to see you, I made it clear that I was not seeking a verbal ruling in private, because it is important that these matters are done publicly, in writing or on the Floor of the House. I think that it is fair to make that request. Today, I ask for a further ruling. Private rulings and verbal considerations are not what we need. We need to know what will happen about the contradiction that I have identified—one rule for authors who get approval from civil servants, and another for hon. Members who cannot table questions on exactly the same matter.

These are matters on which you, Mr. Speaker, are in a position to rule. It might be that if you accept my point that you have a discretion and are no longer bound by the arrangement whereby Ministers decide whether to accept questions—that was the essence of my case—you will feel free to rule publicly, so that everyone can know what is happening and whether you accept the proposition. It is perfectly reasonable to press the matter on the Floor of the House,

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It might be for the convenience of the House if you reminded the House that, following Mr. Speaker Thomas's precedent, you announced shortly after you were first elected as Speaker that you would cause to be published in the *Official Report* any private rulings that could be called into precedent. It is no longer the case, is it, Mr. Speaker, that private rulings are unknown to the House, as was once the case?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that is an exact parallel.

I must tell the hon. Member for Workington that if his point was so very immediate and important, I am amazed that he left it for so long before raising it now as a point of order. He knows that, despite what he may have said about another author and any authorisation that he may have received, I am bound by precedents laid down in "Erskine May". I repeat my earlier offer. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to come and see me about the matter, he may certainly do so. There is nothing more that I can say about it today.

Opposition Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Future Government of Scotland

3.55 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I beg to move,

That this House——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would be helpful if you could tell the House which amendments will be called. Perhaps I might subsequently seek to catch your eye on a further point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I should have announced to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. However, I do not think that that can be a subject for a point of order.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are perhaps aware that last week the Scotland Bill was published in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Without questioning your ruling, Mr. Speaker, may I suggest that it would greatly facilitate the work of examining the government of Scotland if we were allowed to ventilate—particularly in voting terms—the weight of different areas of opinion, especially among Scottish Members? I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, if not your approval, trusting that further consideration may be given to calling the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It appears that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is experiencing something that is regularly experienced by alliance Members. When a motion is in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, only on the Queen's Speech do you call a second amendment. Would it be appropriate for the matter to be considered by the Select Committee on Procedure to establish whether there is scope for the calling of second amendments?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Any hon. Member can put any matter to the Select Committee on Procedure for its adjudication. However, I am bound today by the Standing Orders, which do not allow me to select more than one amendment. That may be done only on the final day of the debate on the Loyal Address.

Mr. Steel: I beg to move,

That this House recognises, as a first step towards the devolution of power throughout a decentralised United Kingdom, the need to establish a Scottish Parliament elected by a system of proportional representation with revenue raising powers and legislative authority on all matters of public policy relating to Scotland, except for matters concerning defence, international affairs and the United Kingdom economy; and further recognises the need to streamline the structure of local government by establishing single-tier local authorities throughout mainland Scotland, while consolidating and developing the powers of the existing islands authorities.

"Throughout the 270 years of Union, Scotland has required — and here it is very different from Wales — separate legislation throughout the whole sphere of domestic matters. This is a major anomaly, which the British Parliament has accepted because it has no alternative. It is an anomaly which has not always worked entirely to the advantage of Scotland because as a result of the requirements of a separate legal system, the British Parliament was unable to meet fully the need for modernising, reforming and improving that legal system. Scotland is the only territory on the face of the earth which has a legal system without a legislature to improve, modernise and amend it. . . .

There are other distinctive Scottish characteristics as well. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Scotland was governed in a different way from the rest of Britain, with different administrative powers, different local government and a different structure of education. In 1885 a Scottish Secretary was appointed, and in the 1920s he was elevated to Secretary of State. In the 1930s the Scottish Office was sent lock, stock and barrel to Edinburgh. All this administrative devolution was done by Conservative Governments, and it was not done out of a feeling of national sentiment, but because of the administrative requirements needed to achieve good government for the Scottish people.

It may be asked why, if we have had this enormous devolution and if Parliament, with a unitary system, is able to respond to the distinct needs of Scotland, this should not continue. It may be asked why, with a separate legal system and a separate Scottish Office, it is necessary to go any farther and establish a directly-elected Assembly. That is a fair question, and it deserves a serious answer. The answer is that throughout the last 270 years a dynamic change has taken place. This is not because the people have changed their minds but because of the increasing complexity of government, requiring more and more administrative devolution, and more powers to be given to the Scottish Office.

We have now a Secretary of State for Scotland who is for all practical purposes a Scottish Prime Minister. He covers a Department the equivalent of which in England and Wales is served by eight or nine Ministries. He has one Department, and Scottish Members are expected to scrutinise his actions. The Scottish Office has more civil servants than the European Commission . . . There has been a qualitative change in the call for devolution. In the early twentieth century the demand for a separate Scottish Legislature was the result of national sentiment. That national sentiment still exists, but added to it is the need for good government, good administration and a better deal for Scottish people within the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1976; Vol. 922, c. 1832-33.]

I have been speaking for about three minutes. Every word that I have spoken so far is taken from a speech by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) in this House on 16 December 1976. I chose those opening words because I am immodest enough to think that others may put forward the same arguments with as much eloquence as the right hon. and learned Member did on that occasion. There is only one alteration to be made. It is now 280 years and not, as he said at the time, 270 years since the Act of Union. But the arguments are just the same. Therefore, I am astonished to find the name of the right hon. and learned Member attached to the Government amendment that you, Mr. Speaker, have just selected, because it refers to rejecting

"as irrelevant . . . arguments for constitutional change for which there is no evidence of popular demand".

The amendment goes on to reject

"any proposals for constitutional change that could undermine the unity of the United Kingdom."

That last phrase was known in debates in the late 1970s as the slippery slope argument, and it appears in the amendment under the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands. However, in another part of the same speech the right hon. and learned Member dealt with the slippery slope argument. He referred to the ultra-Unionists who believe that

[Mr. Steel]

"merely by establishing an Assembly the British identity and the British nationality, which is felt with equal passion by Scots as by Englishmen, will somehow be dissipated and will disappear in a very short time. I have more faith in the British identity as shared by the people of Scotland. It is argued that devolution always leads to separatism. This has been claimed by many hon. Members, especially by some of my hon. Friends. I must challenge them to name an example where that has happened."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1976; Vol. 922, c. 1837.]

I suppose that the right hon. and learned Member is still challenging his hon. Friends to name an example of where that has happened.

As for the reference in the Government's amendment to the current state of public opinion, I can only say that the right hon. and learned Member cannot have read or studied the opinion polls that have been published over the years. If what he said is true of his sentiments in 1976, it is certainly even more true today.

A MORI poll has been published for many years in *The Scotsman* on the subject of devolution. In May 1983, we found that to three questions—first, do people want a completely independent assembly; second, do they want a Scottish assembly as part of Britain but with substantial powers; or, third, do they want no change from the present system — the answers were that 23 per cent. of the people wanted complete independence, that 51 per cent. wanted a Scottish assembly and that 22 per cent. wanted the present system to be retained. However, by April 1987 these figures had changed. The number of people wanting a completely independent assembly had increased to 32 per cent.; those wanting a Scottish assembly as part of Britain amounted to 50 per cent.; and those wanting no change to the present system had gone down to 15 per cent. That is part of the general change of opinion that the polls have recorded ever since 1979. Those who want a Scottish assembly of whatever variety — I prefer to call it a Scottish Parliament—amount to 82 per cent., as against 15 per cent. who wish there to be no change in the present system. How on earth the Government can refer in their amendment to no evidence of popular demand beats me.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): As the right hon. Gentleman develops his argument, will he be arguing for similar and parallel institutions for all the regions of the United Kingdom? Will he be arguing that there should be Secretaries of State for all the other regions? He must, in all honesty, concede that the west midlands, which is comparable in size and population and in the problems that it has to face with Scotland, requires similar representation to that for which he is arguing in Scotland.

Mr. Steel: If the hon. Gentleman will do me the kindness of reading our motion, he will see that we refer to a first step towards greater decentralisation of power. If the hon. Gentleman wants to digress and to deal with that subject, I warmly commend to him the report of the Fisher committee that was published by our alliance before the last election. The report goes into that matter in great detail. This afternoon our purpose is confined to Scotland, as the first case in the process of decentralisation. I recognise that there is scope for extending decentralisation to the west midlands. However, a few moments ago I quoted the authoritative words of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who said that we have a separate legal system. The west midlands does not have a separate legal system, and I do not believe that it wishes to have one. There are differences, but this afternoon we are dealing with devolution to Scotland as a first step, and it is clearly stated to be a first step.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: I have just given way. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The case for decentralisation of government and for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, looking particularly at the Scottish context, is undeniable, given the great increase in the scope of government over the citizen. If one looks back to 1707 or even to the home rule debates of 1913 in Parliament, one finds that today the Government have an involvement in the lives of the citizen that they did not have at the time of those earlier debates —as just one example, over the provision of a National Health Service.

The amount of government over the citizen has greatly increased and the centralisation of government has also increased. Under this Government, centralisation has been increasing, if one adds to the general trend of centralisation the diminution in the authority of local government that has taken place in recent years. Hon. Members are familiar with the over-congestion of business at Westminster. I often think that the time to call a Division on Scottish self-government would be in the middle of the night during the Report stage of a Scottish Bill. Then we should have the support of all English Members for such a change.

The question that all these problems pose to those hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies is whether we, as Scottish politicians, have the vision and the wit to be able to secure a united majority behind any particular set of proposals.

When one looks back at the debates in the Scottish Parliament leading to the Act of Union of 1707, one finds there a very clear division of opinion. There were those who were certainly in favour of the Act of Union but who believed that that should be brought about in a quasi-federal manner — that there should be retained a legislature in Scotland that would be able to deal with Scottish domestic affairs—*[Interruption.]* Unfortunately, those who were dealing with the matter at the time— *[Interruption.]* No doubt the antecedents of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) who is continuing to interrupt from a sedentary position were in favour of an incorporating Union. Their arguments won the day. However, those who did not believe in an incorporating Union have continued to express that view. We have not suddenly discovered a new issue in the latter part of the 20th century. Throughout our political history since the Act of Union, there have been many political moves to ensure internal self-government for Scotland.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: I suppose that I had better give way to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) on the understanding that if I give way to him once he will retain a reasonable modicum of silence.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Steel: No, I am giving way to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman. He has accused me of making sedentary interventions, but he will not give way when I am on my feet. For those of us who have not read Scottish history, will the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to tell us which debates suggested that there should be a federal system in the great debate of 1706, which peers were and were not bribed by the English and by how much and finally what were the proposals? I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman has read any Scottish history.

Mr. Steel: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the Library and the learned works of the late Lord Cooper. If he reads those, he will discover all the answers to his questions. I will not be deflected into debating the events of 1707. I have simply said that the issue has not been settled since 1707.

Many hon. Members may be unaware of the fact, or may have forgotten, that in 1913 the House gave a Second Reading to a home rule Bill for Scotland. The legislation proceeded no further simply because of the outbreak of the first world war. The vote is on the record and the principle was approved by the House. More recently, the nearest that we have come to securing any measure of internal self-government was in the 1978-79 legislation and the referendum in 1979. The people of Scotland voted by 52 per cent. to 48 per cent. in the referendum in favour of the proposed assembly.

When we consider the issue today and in other debates in the next few weeks we must ask ourselves if, as I asserted earlier, there has always been a substantial majority in favour of the principle of internal self-government, why, when it came to a vote on the proposal, was the majority so narrow and why did it fail to meet the qualifying majority required under statute? I believe that there are two basic reasons why the majority was narrow.

First, there was a failure in the political presentation of the case. I could make many references to the referendum debates, but I will cite just one or two. There was a powerful intervention at the time by the former Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Home, who argued that people should vote against the proposals because he thought that they were defective, and particularly that the devolution package proposed no revenue-raising powers for the Parliament. In his speech in Edinburgh he said:

"I should hesitate to vote No if I did not think that the parties will keep the devolution issue at the top of their priorities."

He went on to advocate a no vote because the Scottish legislation provided no tax powers, no proportional representation and no well-defined formula for separating Scottish and English business at Westminster.

We should remember the political atmosphere in the first half of 1979. That was after the winter of discontent and at that time we must admit that the Labour Government were extremely unpopular. For a Conservative leader of the stature of Lord Home to urge Conservative voters to vote no in the referendum on the grounds that any future Conservative Government would come forward with better proposals was a powerful and telling argument and I believe that it swayed many Conservative voters in the referendum.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman remind the House how he and the Liberal party voted on the famous occasion when the Labour Government were seeking to remain in power in order to preserve the devolution proposals and bring them into being?

Mr. Steel: The hon. Gentleman must not try my patience. He knows perfectly well that by the time it——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): What did the right hon. Gentleman do?

Mr. Steel: The hon. Gentleman knows what I did. By the time that we came to that vote, the referendum had already been held.

Mr. Buchan: No, it had not.

Mr. Steel: Yes, it had. The issue was dead. I am trying to analyse why the issue was dead at that time.

I want to consider how the Labour party conducted the referendum. It was conducted at a time when the Labour Government was unpopular. Unlike the referendum on entry into the European Community, in which I was also involved, there was no question of all-party support for and against devolution with proper funding for both sides of the case. For reasons best known to itself, the Labour party chose to push the devolution argument as part of Government proposals and as part of the Labour party platform. I remember photographs of the noble Lord Callaghan, the former leader of the Labour party, appearing on posters all over Scotland saying "Vote yes to devolution." The political atmosphere on both sides——

Mr. Maxton: Why should my noble Friend not have done that?

Mr. Steel: Because that made it a single-party issue. If the Labour party does not believe that that was a contributory factor in the failure to achieve an overwhelming majority, it had better think again. The politics of the devolution argument helped to ensure that we did not achieve the qualified majority.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that many Labour Back Benchers opposed devolution, including, incidentally, my right hon. Friend the present leader of the Labour party, who has a Welsh interest. The right hon. Gentleman must be aware that many of us were prepared to go along with devolution up to a point. However, we did not believe that it was necessary to break up our United Kingdom if that resulted in three nations instead of the one which deals with the basic economic problems that we face.

Mr. Steel: In substance I would argue that our proposal does not seek to break up the United Kingdom. I will argue in a moment that it would provide for more effective economic management of Scotland if there were internal self-government. In response to the hon. Gentleman's political point, of course I have not forgotten the position taken by the present leader of the Labour party at the time. However, like the present Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has enjoyed the luxury of changing his opinion. However, the Leader of the Opposition has changed his opinion in the right direction, unlike the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Until now, the right hon. Gentleman's argument from an alliance point of view

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

has been quite sound. However, his analysis of the political situation in Scotland in 1979 is fundamentally flawed. The right hon. Gentleman cannot possibly say that the referendum was held in Scotland when the Labour Government was unpopular in Scotland as 12 weeks later we went to the country, because the right hon. Gentleman joined with the Tories to bring the Labour Government down, and increased the number of seats held by Labour Members in Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Steel: I do not have the figures to hand, but if the hon. Gentleman considers the Labour vote in Scotland since 1945 and studies the dip that occurred in 1979, he will understand that my basic point is true.

If Labour Members will not accept it from me, they should consider the comments made by Mr. Alan Massie in *The Sunday Times* yesterday. He said that unless the lessons were learned, there was a risk in any future devolution that measures would be Labour measures rather than Scottish measures. Labour Members should take that to heart.

I said that the reasons for lack of enthusiasm in the referendum were twofold. The first related to the political presentation. The other, more important, reason relates to defects in the substance of the package on offer. I believe that there were three defects in the package. The first was that identified by Lord Home, involving the lack of revenue-raising powers. Without going into detail now because we will have another opportunity to debate it later, I welcome the fact that the new Labour party Bill on Scotland recognises and corrects that defect that occurred in the previous devolution package. In the age of the computer it should certainly be easier to arrange for a Scottish Parliament to have income tax or sales tax-raising powers and certainly it would not be a proper Parliament unless it had scope for raising its own expenditure.

The second defect in the devolution proposals was the deliberate attempt to ignore the recommendation by the Royal Commission on the constitution, under Lord Kilbrandon, that any Scottish assembly should be constituted by a system of proportional representation. The commission recommended that, not because of arguments about fairness or unfairness to Liberals or any other minority, but because it believed that it would be wrong, and unacceptable to public opinion, to establish in Scotland a Parliament which might, for a long time, come under the dominance of one party and of one region of Scotland.

We have to face the fact that Scotland's population is not evenly spread throughout its territory. Half the population lives in the Strathclyde region. It would be possible—in the referendum this was reflected in anxiety throughout the rest of Scotland — that an assembly, improperly constituted, could be dominated by the economic power of one region.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: I shall not give way again. I have given way at least five times.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Give way.

Mr. Steel: I shall not give way.

The proposition which Kilbrandon pointed out, and was ignored at the time, was that any assembly constituted in Scotland should enjoy the confidence of every part of Scotland. It is no use the Labour party whingeing about a Conservative Government with 42 per cent. of popular support in the United Kingdom denying certain legislation such as Scottish devolution, when the Labour party, by coincidence, has exactly 42 per cent. support from the people in Scotland. In the interests of getting a package through, Labour Members would be wise to pay attention to the state of public opinion outside the central belt where their dominance is so obvious.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: I shall not give way again. I have given way at least five times and I do not want to make an inordinately long speech.

The third and last defect that I identified in the previous package was the failure to meet the argument that the people of Scotland were being offered an extra layer of government and an extra tier of bureaucracy. That is why we say in our motion that we would "streamline" local government to reduce it to a single tier under a Scottish Parliament. We do not want to increase the layers of local government available to the people of Scotland.

We accept the recommendation in the Kilbrandon report to reduce the number of Scottish Members of Parliament to the same ratio per population as applies in England and Wales, and to abolish the post of Secretary of State for Scotland. Unless we grasp the necessary constitutional changes, those who argue against us that we shall create more bureaucracy will have a case. We must accept the logic of our argument and accept diminutions of Government elsewhere.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steel: Since I have read the distinguished article by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), I shall give way to him.

Mr. Raison: The right hon. Gentleman has acknowledged that if devolution were introduced Scottish representation would have to be on the same basis as it is for the rest of the United Kingdom. But it would be extremely hard to maintain it at that and there would be strong pressure to reduce it. The right hon. Gentleman has not met the famous West Lothian question. It is possible to conceive that Scottish Members of Parliament would vote on English domestic legislation while English Members would have no comparable say in Scottish legislation. Because of that, devolution could never command trust and acceptance.

Mr. Steel: I hope that I shall carry the right hon. Member for Aylesbury with me when I say that as a first step it is necessary to deal with the over-representation of Scotland in Westminster if we are to devolve government. If we then proceed to devolve government to Wales and to the regions of England we shall have to re-examine the total composition of Parliament here. In the meantime, I say frankly that there is no answer to the West Lothian question. I suppose we should now call it the Linlithgow question. We have to accept the illogicalities of our actions

here, just as we have accepted them over the years for representatives from Northern Ireland. None of us pretends that the change is without anomalies but I believe that the anomalies will be far fewer than those that exist in the present legislative system.

I believe that Edinburgh could once again be a centre of political power, controlling the development of our culture, education and legal system, and be the custodian of our history and separate church identity. There is evidence that there is a connection between the growth of prosperity and the weight of economic power in the south-east of England, and the concentration of political power.

During the last 12 months I have been present at federal elections in Germany and Canada. During state elections in Hamburg and Ontario I saw evidence of local political dynamism, power and interest on a scale wholly different from our experience in local government elections. Britain is the most overcentralised country in Europe. I believe that the assembly building waiting in Edinburgh should now be filled and that Edinburgh should have its heart restored.

4.26 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to end of the end of Question and to add instead thereof:

"rejects as irrelevant to the wellbeing of Scotland arguments for constitutional change for which there is no evidence of popular demand; acknowledges the benefits that Scotland enjoys from the existing arrangements; and rejects any proposals for constitutional change that could undermine the unity of the United Kingdom."

I congratulate the leader of the Liberal party on his speech. I found the first five minutes to be particularly well-phrased, felicitous and entirely persuasive — *[Interruption.]* I feel no concern at all that the right hon. Gentleman should choose to quote from a speech that I made in the House. I say that for the simple reason that my views have not changed. Now, as then, I can see certain theoretical attractions in allowing within Scotland clearly Scottish matters to be determined by an elected Scottish assembly.

In his final comments the right hon. Gentleman produced the crunch of the question. In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) he said "there is no answer to the West Lothian question." The right hon. Gentleman correctly quoted me as saying that there is no other territory of which I am aware that has its own legal system but which does not have a legislature to legislate exclusively for the needs of that legal system. The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there is no other part of the world of which I am aware where one territory in an otherwise unitary state is provided with a devolved Parliament and Government of the kind that he and the Labour party propose.

We were equally aware of that fundamental anomaly 10 years ago. The argument then was that such was the demand from the people of Scotland — and indeed of Wales — for some constitutional change, however illogical, and however much it failed to answer the fundamental point that the right hon. Gentleman today recognised, we must make that change because the break up of the Union was the inevitable alternative. I confess that to some extent I, like many others, succumbed to that argument, but I remember that we debated an amendment tabled by a Labour Member proposing that an assembly should be established only if at least 40 per cent. of the electorate of Scotland and Wales voted for such a fundamental change. I happily spoke for that amendment and voted for it. I believed then, as I believe now, that the only basis on which we can introduce and implement a constitutional anomaly with the fundamental defect that the right hon. Gentleman recognised is if there were an overwhelming demand, as the price of the Union, for such a change.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall be happy to give way, as I believe that this will be the only contribution that the hon. Gentleman will make to the debate.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has heard me make many speeches on devolution, and I thought that he might be grateful if someone else spoke on this occasion.

The difficulty with the extremely ingenious fleet-footed performance that we are now watching is that in the debates that have been referred to the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not appear to be saying, "I am reluctantly going along with the devolution argument because I see that there is overwhelming pressure from the people of Scotland." He was leading the argument for devolution from the Conservative Benches. With his usual cogency, he was putting forward the positive case for devolution. He cannot escape from that except by saying —and there would be nothing dishonourable about this —that he had changed his mind about the worth of the argument. He at least owes us an explanation of his reasons for changing his mind.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should instruct his research worker to work slightly harder in reading my previous remarks on the subject. In voting for the 40 per cent. rule I said that I believed strongly that the only basis for introducing a form of devolution, which I described at the time as inherently anomalous, would be an overwhelming demand from the people of Scotland or Wales for such a change. When the referendum took place, the overwhelming majority of the Welsh people were against the proposal, and two thirds of the people of Scotland declined to vote for it.

Within 24 hours of the announcement of the results of the referendum I made it clear that I thought there was no basis for a fundamental constitutional change which the rest of the United Kingdom did not want and to which two thirds of the people of Scotland were either indifferent or positively hostile.

Mr. Steel: In that case, how does the Secretary of State explain his remarks later in the speech that I quoted, when he said:

"I do not suggest that simply because the will of the people has been established in Scotland this House must automatically accede to that demand and establish devolution. To suggest that would be to imply that this Parliament is merely a rubber stamp for popular sentiment." —[*Official Report*, 16 December 1976; Vol. 922, c. 1831.]

Mr. Rifkind: That is absolutely right. I do, indeed, take that view. The supreme objective of any Unionist is to preserve the Union. If it became clear that certain constitutional changes were required to ensure the future of the Union, whatever doubts many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and I might have, we are so attached to the Union of the United Kingdom that we would reluctantly

[Mr. Rifkind]

be prepared to see those constitutional changes made. However, the referendum clearly demonstrated that that was not the case.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and his hon. Friends on allowing the House to debate these matters. We have been given the privilege of seeing the amendment tabled by the Labour party, which refers to a preferential system of constitutional change and suggests that the House should address itself to the proposals put forward in the Bill presented by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I know that the whole House will share my sadness and surprise that the hon. Member for Garscadden is not to grace the Dispatch Box today to give us the benefit of his views. For the past few months the Labour party has sought to ensure that there is a day on which we can debate Scottish affairs; but, for various reasons on which I shall not dwell, we have not yet had such an opportunity. Against that background, the silence of the hon. Member for Garscadden is somewhat puzzling.

I would not suggest that a debate on devolution without the hon. Gentleman is like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, but rather that it is like Hamlet without the first gravedigger. The absence from the debate of a contribution from the hon. Gentleman—and indeed the absence of two thirds of Scottish Labour Members—is not a coincidence. It demonstrates that, as the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale said, the Labour party's commitment to devolution is not pursued on the grounds of any perceived national interest, but stems from a partisan and party-political point of view. The hon. Member for Garscadden wanted to lead a debate on devolution. He was deprived of that opportunity by the Liberal party, and now that he cannot be captain of the team he does not want to play.

On a whole series of matters we have seen that the Labour party, whose original commitment to devolution arose from its fear of the Scottish National party, now considers devolution merely as a means of seeking to achieve the political domination of the whole of Scotland that it presently has in Strathclyde region. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If hon. Members think that that is not true, let me ask them a question. We know that one of the main differences between Labour Members and Liberal and SDP Members is on the question of proportional representation. If the hon. Member for Garscadden was required to choose between having no Scottish assembly and having an assembly elected by proportional representation, which would he choose?

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I am addressing the hon. Member for Garscadden. If he were offered such a choice, which option would he prefer?

Mr. Dewar: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, it is a false choice. His question is part of a rather unpleasant speech in which the intellectual dishonesty of his position has been absolutely apparent. The only person who will not recognise that is the right hon. and learned Gentleman himself. We have a disagreement with the Liberal party about PR, as has the right hon. and learned Gentleman. However, we have said repeatedly that what we should be doing in Scotland is working hard to achieve the assembly that we all seek. Once that has been achieved, the Scots themselves can consider the other matters involved.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's remarks have made it abundantly clear — if we needed any further convincing—that the only assembly in which the Labour party is interested is one that it believes it can dominate. Let us be clear that this partisan approach to the affairs of Scotland and its constitutional requirements does the Labour party no credit.

I listened with great interest to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. He put forward many of the general constitutional arguments that we have heard so often. Like all Opposition Members, he is required, not only to explain the attractions that might flow from the creation of an assembly from the point of view of the supervision of Scottish business, but to address himself to the consequences of the kind of devolution proposed by him and by the Labour party. Except on the question of proportional representation, there is very little difference between Labour Members and SDP and Liberal Members.

Although Liberal Members like to talk of themselves as members of a federalist party calling for a federalist option, it is clear from the terms of the motion that they realise how unrealistic that is. If they thought that there was a demand from England, Wales or elsewhere in the United Kingdom for a federal system, they would not refer to "a first step". They would call for the introduction of all the necessary provisions simultaneously. It is because they realise that, certainly in England, there is no interest whatever in the kind of federal structure that has been dear to them for so long that they end up saying that for Scotland, and for Scotland alone, there should be the creation of a devolved system of government within what is otherwise a unitary state.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that there is a distinction between Scotland and the English regions by reason of the fact that Scotland has its own legal system?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course I do. That is a very obvious difference, which is reflected in the different arrangements for dealing with Scottish business which have now existed for over 100 years. The hon. and learned Gentleman and I would not be qualified practitioners of the Scottish legal system if, since the Act of Union over a quarter of a millenium ago, separate provision had not been made to reflect that requirement. The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that, and it is a very important consideration.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): If the Secretary of State is so concerned that Scotland should not have the first opportunity of experiencing devolution, why is the Conservative party so happy to run pell-mell into imposing the poll tax in Scotland long before imposing it elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted to reassure the hon. Lady that I oppose the proposal before us, not because Scotland would be pioneering constitutional change, but because there is not the slightest possibility that anyone would follow Scotland. That is the fundamental point. We are talking, not about the introduction of a change, to be followed 12 months later by comparable changes for other parts of the United Kingdom, but about——

Mr. Douglas: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

Those of us who are Unionists—I mean all Members of the House other than the members of the nationalist parties—are concerned about avoiding a constitutional change that would weaken Scotland's place in the United Kingdom. The leader of the Liberal party rightly referred to my having said that devolution would not necessarily lead to the break up of the United Kingdom. I happen personally to take that view. I do not believe that it would necessarily lead to the break up of the United Kingdom, but I strongly believe that the kind of unilateral devolution that is put before us would gravely weaken Scotland's involvement and influence within the United Kingdom —its capacity to influence United Kingdom decisions that gravely affect Scotland. That must be taken into account.

Mr. Steel: The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot keep on pretending that his change of face has occurred simply because of public opinion. Towards the end of that earlier speech he said:

"I believe that these proposals will ultimately lead to a federal United Kingdom, and perhaps the quicker it comes the better."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1976; Vol. 922, c. 1836.]

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, and that was before the referendum, which demonstrated clearly that neither within Wales nor within Scotland was there the basis for the constitutional change that the right hon. Gentleman seeks.

The Liberal party has conceded, for example, that devolution of the kind proposed would eliminate the office of Secretary of State. In that, the Liberal party is more honest than those in the Labour party who wish to continue with that office, although there will be no rule for the incumbent of that office, whether Labour or Conservative, to carry out. If one removes from any Department of State its budget, its legislative functions and its executive responsibilities, it is absurd to suggest that there can continue to be an individual who carries out that office and has any influence on matters relevant to Scottish requirements. The alliance parties are more consistent and accurate in their inevitable predictions than is the Labour party, which, as always, tries to get the best of all possible worlds and ends up with an incredible arrangement.

Mr. Heffer: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Mr. Heffer: It is also an English issue.

Mr. Rifkind: No doubt we shall have the benefit of the hon. Gentleman's contribution later in the debate.

As the leader of the Liberal party has acknowledged, there would be a substantial reduction in the number of Scottish Members of Parliament. That is not necessarily a fundamental issue, although clearly it would not be helpful to the advancement of Scottish interests within the United Kingdom. The most fundamental problem, which the Opposition have not even begun to address, is what used to be known as the West Lothian question. If we are talking about devolution and about 72 Scottish Members continuing to be in the House, there is no way in which the hon. Member for Garscadden, other hon. Members representing Scottish constituencies and I can expect to continue to vote on a series of matters that affect people living in England when Members from English constituencies have been deprived of a comparable right to influence those matters north of the border. The hon. Member for Garscadden knows that that is a fundamental problem which no one has been able to identify and answer.

The effect of introducing such a system is not that it would necessarily lead to the break up of the United Kingdom, but that, sooner or later, it would lead to two classes of Members in the House. All hon. Members would vote on United Kingdom issues and an attempt would be made, and ultimately be successful, to deprive hon. Members from those parts of the United Kingdom with devolved legislatures of any right to vote or participate in matters that did not affect their territory. That would produce the gravest constitutional anomaly.

We can easily anticipate a United Kingdom Government with a majority in the United Kingdom but without a majority in England. Are we to say, therefore, that their programme would be severely truncated? They would have no way of knowing which of their programmes they could carry and which they could not. When presenting their revenue proposals and asking the House to approve taxation they would have no way of knowing whether the revenue raised could be spent or whether a majority would be forthcoming for a range of their proposals.

These are not minor or peripheral matters. The leader of the Liberal party acknowledged that this was a major problem and went on to say that he had no answers. It is not responsible to say, "There is a fundamental problem. I have no answers to it. Nevertheless, I ask you to go ahead with my proposals."

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I give way to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

Mr. Maclennan: The right hon. and learned Gentleman speaks of the——

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was recognised during our discussion on devolution in previous Parliaments that the issue of devolution for Scotland, Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom was not merely a Scottish or Welsh matter, but was a matter for all of us. I have been in the House of Commons for a long time. We are discussing Scotland, but the debate also affects those of us who are English. We, too, have a point of view. I hope that hon. Members will give way to English Members, who also have a point of view on this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member is making an intervention and calling it a point of order. It is an intervention, not a point of order.

Mr. Maclennan: The Secretary of State speaks as though the proposition that he has put forward is novel. Does he recall that the position is wholly unchanged from the time when he gave his support to the proposal to set up a devolved power? Does he agree that this is not a constitutional anomaly unknown to Britain and that this is clear from the fact that there have been 50 years of

[Mr. Maclennan]

devolved government in Northern Ireland and the House has made no attempt to curtail the voting powers of Northern Ireland Members? There is no reason why, if Scotland enjoyed devolved government, Scottish Members should be deprived of the rights enjoyed for so long by Northern Ireland Members.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is unwise in using that parallel. He should recollect that the establishment of an Assembly in Northern Ireland led, first, to a substantial reduction in the number of Ulster Members in the House and, secondly, to the end of the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland and the almost total removal of Ulster's ability to influence successive United Kingdom Governments over the next 50 years on matters that affected Ulster equally with the rest of the United Kingdom. It is no coincidence that it took the abolition of the Northern Ireland Assembly to recreate the position of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the Cabinet and increase the number of Northern Ireland Members of Parliament.

I do not doubt that if Scotland wanted to have the same influence on successive British Governments on United Kingdom issues involving the economy, defence, industrial relations, taxation, and so on as Ulster Members of Parliament and the Province had on those Governments over the past 60 years, a Scottish assembly might be tolerable. If that is the degree of influence in Scotland that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland wants as a Scottish Member and a Unionist, by all means let him quote that parallel. If he believes that that would be disastrous to Scotland's ability to ensure that its interests were fully represented around the United Kingdom Cabinet table and in the United Kingdom House of Commons, he must realise that the Irish precedent is damaging to his cause and in no way helps it.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The precedent is even more damning than that. The leader of the Liberal party wants proportional representation, so presumably he wants 10 fewer Scottish Members than there are in the House. Scotland is over-represented on the basis of proportional representation, and we now know that the acting leader of one section of the Social Democrats wants even that number reduced still more if the motion is passed. Perhaps by the time my right hon. and learned Friend sits down the alliance parties will have decided between them by how many they want Scottish representation in the House reduced if the motion is passed.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. The alliance parties have publicly committed themselves to a reduction in Scottish parliamentary representation, to the ending of the office of Secretary of State for Scotland and to a reliance on other measures to ensure that Scotland's interests are properly represented by future United Kingdom Governments.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been making great play of what was called the West Lothian question. He is, of course, entitled to do that. It is undoubtedly a problem, which he is greatly exaggerating. The right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about strain. Does he accept that many people in Scotland feel that a group of politicians who do not command anything like a substantial section of support in Scotland and who fall far short of a winning position in Scottish elections totally control our domestic legislation? Does that not put a strain on the structure of the United Kingdom, which should be removed by a devolution settlement?

Finally—I should like to press the right hon. and learned Gentleman on this—if the test is not his own personal opinion and the views that he apparently argued so fiercely in the late 1970s, but merely the state of public opinion, will he hold a referendum on devolution to ascertain public opinion in Scotland at the moment?

Mr. Rifkind: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the speech that he made so courageously a couple of days ago. It is strange to hear him suggest today that we should concede devolution because the Government have limited authority in Scotland because of their weak political position there. The hon. Gentleman was courageous enough to warn his hon. Friends and his party that such an argument could be used by Members of the Scottish National party, but not by anyone belonging to a Unionist party, such as the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that and stick to his argument, because it is fundamental to his entire political philosophy.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is woefully misinterpreting my position on this issue. I have always said that devolution is a way of strengthening the United Kingdom by proving that our system can respond to the special needs of Scotland. We want a greater say over Scottish affairs within the framework of the United Kingdom. That has been the Labour party's position through good and bad times, and we shall stand by it, because we believe in it. I suggest that the right hon. and learned Gentleman tries standing by his ideas also.

Mr. Rifkind: I had not appreciated that the Labour party would have two Front-Bench spokesmen today. However, we are grateful for the hon. Gentleman's views and wait to see whether they coincide with those of his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton).

Mr. Heffer: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many of us in England feel precisely as do the Scots about support from the Government? Is he aware that many of us honestly feel that if the Scots decided, perhaps wrongly, on UDI, some of us, representing places such as Liverpool, would be only too keen to join them, because we are fed up that the Government take no notice of the people in Scotland, or in the north-east and north-west of England? The Government do not give a damn about our problems, which is why the demand for devolution is rising in Scotland and elsewhere. If the Government were really concerned about the people in this country as a whole, they would take notice of us and deal with our problems in a sensible manner.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that most of the issues that concern the electorate in Scotland concern also the electorate in England, in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom. Few hon. Members believe that constitutional change is the answer to those problems.

There is another fundamental point to which the leader of the Liberal party hardly drew attention, but which his proposals and those of the Labour party would bring about if their schemes were implemented and which was

not true 10 years ago. I refer to the power of taxation. Both the Labour party and the alliance parties propose that a Scottish assembly should have a power to what is euphemistically referred to as vary the power of taxation, which we all know means to increase it. We have heard again and again from the Labour party that if an assembly had been created it could have given extra help to this, that and the other interests that they claim have been deprived of such help over the last few years. That clearly means that they would have used such a power of taxation to increase the level of taxes and the burden of taxation in Scotland. Essentially, what is being proposed is that people in Scotland should continue to pay the same level of taxation as everywhere else, plus an additional level of taxation, which will not be levied in England or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and which is supposed to be of benefit to the Scottish economy.

It can be of little surprise that the overwhelming view of those in industry, and commerce, and of those involved in attracting investment to Scotland, is that such a proposition would do enormous damage to jobs, investment and that country's economic interests. Professor John Shaw, the executive director of Scottish Financial Enterprise, who is seeking to attract new investment and new institutions into Scotland, has said publicly that he believes that such a proposal would damage intensely the efforts that he and his colleagues are making. The Confederation of British Industry in Scotland, representing industry, has said that it believes that such a proposal would be devastating for employment and for the prospects of the Scottish economy. We know that the chambers of commerce and the Institute of Directors have expressed similar views. Those are facts which hon. Members must take into account.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) *rose*——

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: No, I shall not give way, because many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and I have already given way on many occasions.

In the short term, the single most damaging element of the proposals that have been put forward, which we have been told are an improvement on the proposals of 10 years ago, is that the leader of the Liberal party knows that his proposals have been rejected by Scottish industry and by those who seek to bring new investment and employment to Scotland.

Finally, I shall deal briefly with the suggestion that, despite all the anomalies and problems, we must recognise the demand for devolution that we are told exists in Scotland, notwithstanding the result of the referendum that was held eight or nine years ago.—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the general election?"] I have just been asked to take account of the result of the general election. I refer hon. Members to the fact that we are constantly told that various opinion polls, which have been reported in the press, tell us that devolution is the wish of the Scottish people.

The leader of the Liberal party referred to various MORI polls that have appeared in *The Scotsman*. I refer him to the poll that appeared on 15 May this year, only a couple of weeks before the general election. People were asked:

"What do you think are the two most important election issues?"

We were informed that unemployment featured in the responses of 63 per cent., the National Health Service in 29 per cent., pensions in 22 per cent., education in 16 per cent., inflation in 14 per cent., defence in 13 per cent., housing in 11 per cent., law and order in 10 per cent., disarmament in 9 per cent., taxation in 9 per cent., social services in 7 per cent., the community charge in 7 per cent., rates and rents in 4 per cent. and devolution in 4 per cent. Therefore, 96 per cent. of those who were asked did not believe that they were voting on the subject of devolution. If it is of any comfort to Opposition Members, that 4 per cent. represents exactly double the number who responded in that way three months earlier, when the figure was only 2 per cent. Perhaps opinion is moving in their direction.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Douglas: I knew that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would not.

Mr. Rifkind: In that case, the hon. Gentleman should not have asked.

I must advise Opposition Members that few hon. Members believe that the issue of devolution affected the votes of more than a handful of people at the election in Scotland. This poll, so beloved of Opposition Members, shows that 96 per cent. were concerned with issues that are equally relevant to people in England, Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom. It is on that basis that we reject the motion and ask the House to support our amendment.

4.58 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Before I turn to what I must describe as that rather poor speech by the Secretary of State — a speech that was unprincipled, shameless and, for him, lacking in his normal logic—I should like to say something about the motion tabled by the Liberal party. However, first I should say that my hon. Friends and I welcome the debate. It is right that the House should debate devolution on as many issues and as many times as possible. The Labour party has put devolution and the Scottish assembly back on the agenda and we welcome the Liberal party's attempt to climb on the bandwagon and stage this debate. I assure the Secretary of State that, far from being upstaged by the Liberal party, we intend to have a debate on our Bill before Christmas.

I cannot advise my hon. Friends to support the Liberal motion. The Labour party, as the majority party in Scotland, fully supports devolution and has the right to put that principle before the House. We are not prepared to support a proposal for devolution which contains proportional representation because we do not believe that it will serve the interests of Scotland or those of the rural communities which so concern alliance Members. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has an electorate of some 37,000. His hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has a constituency of some 30,000, as has the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Our system of two assembly members for each of the present constituencies will give a larger proportion of seats for the rural areas than would proportional representation. On the simple facts of population, that must be so.

Mr. Galbraith: Is not the alliance misleading the electorate into thinking that proportional representation means a redistribution from the urban to the rural areas, when it is purely about redistribution between parties and the rural areas will suffer significantly? Does he agree that it is wrong to mislead the people of Scotland in that way?

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We seek a firm commitment from the Liberals that they will support our proposals. The Labour party is the majority party in Scotland and they should throw their weight behind our proposals and not muddy the water with extraneous matters such as proportional representation. We cannot support the motion because it is unamendable and Mr. Speaker in his wisdom has decided not to call our amendment. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), however, has a ten-minute Bill later this week. I shall support that Bill and I suggest that many of my hon. Friends will do so because if that Bill is given a Second Reading we can then amend it to take out proportional representation. *[Interruption.]* Liberal Members may laugh, but that makes perfect constitutional sense. We cannot amend the motion, but we can amend a Bill because the Labour party is the majority party in Scotland. The leader of the Liberal party may think that a joke, but he did not make the position clear in his speech. The Secretary of State should have asked the right hon. Gentleman rather than the Labour party about proportional representation. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, who has been constantly supported by his hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), made it clear in an article in "Radical Scotland" that proportional representation was a prerequisite of devolution and that the Liberal party would not support any devolution measure which did not include proportional representation. That is the Liberal party position and the leader of that party should have made it clear today.

As for the Secretary of State and his attack on the Labour party in relation to proportional representation, if he is making a firm offer to the House of a devolution measure including proportional representation, we shall consider it carefully. Personally, I would support the principle of such a measure and seek to amend it by taking out proportional representation. If, on the other hand, the Secretary of State was merely using proportional representation as a cheap debating point, his comment is not worthy of consideration.

The Secretary of State made a generally cheap speech. He has clearly forgotten any principles that he once had. He now says that he does not really believe in devolution at all. He used to be known as the liberal Tory, but he has moved dramatically to the right on nearly all issues and nowhere more spectacularly than on devolution. He squirmed about trying to give reasons for changing his principles and giving up devolution, but there is only one real reason. The Prime Minister is not a devolutionist and the Secretary of State on every occasion puts his position in the Cabinet above his principles on devolution or the interests of the people of Scotland. There is no other explanation.

In one debate after another in the past, the Secretary of State said that he believed in the principle of devolution. During the Report stage of the 1978 Bill he said:

> "Many of us on both sides of the House have believed for a long time that there is a majority in Scotland who want devolution."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1978; Vol. 944, c. 595.]

[Interruption.] He now says that they were wrong, but in an interview reported in *The Sunday Times* on 21 June this year the right hon. Gentleman is quoted as follows:

> "Sooner or later, if there is a genuine demand for constitutional change in any part of the United Kingdom, that is something that a democratic party like the Conservative party always listens to and responds to."

That statement was made not in 1978 but this year, just after the general election, under the headline "Rifkind 'prepared to consider devolution'."

How much more evidence does the Secretary of State want of the demand for devolution? Whatever he may say, the majority of people who voted in the referendum in 1979 voted in favour of devolution. The opponents of devolution insisted on the 40 per cent. rule, although every election before and since has been based on a straight majority. The referendum showed that there was an overwhelming demand for devolution. In the 1979 general election, the Labour party increased the number of seats that it held while the Conservative shadow Secretary of State, who had made opposition to devolution a major plank in the Conservative campaign, lost his seat. In the 1983 election, the Labour party again improved its position. In 1987, the Tory vote collapsed to a mere 24 per cent. and the Conservatives lost 11 seats. Every other party in Scotland, in all those elections and especially in 1987, had devolution not just as part of their campaigns but as a major plank in their campaigns.

The Labour party and the alliance certainly did that and the SNP was more in favour of independence than devolution but was prepared to support it. Those three parties, who represent 76 per cent. of Scottish voters in the last general election, had devolution as a major plank in their campaigns. Opinion poll after opinion poll said that the Scottish people wanted devolution. Our canvasses in Kincardine and Garscadden since the election give us the same figure—75 per cent. to 76 per cent. have voted yes to devolution.

What evidence does the Secretary of State need? Why does he say that there is no demand? He bases that statement on one opinion poll. I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman if it was two opinion polls rather than one. It would not stand up at a by-election, a local election or a general election. Opinion polls have consistently said that the Scottish people want nothing to do with the Tory party and want devolution so that the Scottish assembly can govern its own affairs. What will the Secretary of State do about it? If he says that there is no evidence whatsoever that the Scottish people want devolution, I challenge him to test that, to put his money where his principles used to be, and hold another referendum. Let him put the principle of devolution to the Scottish people.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman has not been here during any of the debate. He cannot walk in 10 minutes into my speech and expect to intervene.

I will guarantee, and I am sure that my hon. Friends and the alliance will do the same, that if the Secretary of State brings a Bill before the House for a referendum in Scotland on devolution, we will allow it through without any opposition whatsoever. We want to see the result of such a referendum. I challenge the Secretary of State to do

it. He will not, because he knows that he will lose dramatically. That is the overwhelming question for the Secretary of State to answer.

Mr. Wallace: Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to accept a second question in that referendum: do the Scottish people want proportional representation?

Mr. Maxton: I always knew that the Liberal party puts proportional representation above the principles of devolution. The hon. Member has just proved that yet again. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] That is up to the Secretary of State. However, I must say that the evidence of the last three general elections shows that the people of Scotland would reject proportional representation, as during the past three general elections they rejected the parties that supported proportional representation. If the Secretary of State is prepared to hold a referendum, I and my party will accept the verdict of the people of Scotland. Why cannot the Secretary of State do the same? Why is he not prepared to accept that there is a case for devolution? The people of Scotland want it, and he should test their opinion.

We must again put on record the arguments for devolution. The overwhelming one is that the majority of Scottish people feel that they are not properly represented in the House, and do not get a fair deal from this Parliament. When we have a Conservative Government in power with a tiny minority of hon. Members in Scotland. Scottish people get policies that they do not want. We have to accept, even though we are not separatists, that there is an element of Scottish nationalism in the debate. The people of Scotland feel that they are Scots first and Britons second. They do not feel that they are Scots and not Britons. That is recognised in a separate Scottish legislation, a Scottish legal system, a Scottish housing system, a Scottish local government system, and a Secretary of State for Scotland. All that is recognised. We do not have recognition of that on a democratic and political level. Scotland should be recognised as a nation within the United Kingdom and part and parcel of the political scene. I think that the Secretary of State used to believe in that.

We must recognise that already there is a massive amount of devolution. It is constitutional devolution—legislation goes through this House that applies only to Scotland. The Scottish Office represents eight Departments at United Kingdom level. It has a Civil Service, 98 per cent. of which lives and works in Scotland, not London. Scotland is largely administered separately from the remainder of the United Kingdom. However, what Scotland does not have—and it is not the West Lothian question, or perhaps the Cathcart question; I do not care what it is called—is the bureaucratic structure required by that level of administrative devolution so that the views of the Scottish people can be represented and so that they can control their affairs. Even without the current political position, there should still be that level of political and democratic devolution.

How absurd it is, and how more pressing is the need for devolution, when the Secretary of State with his Ministers — now only four, rather than five — and five Back Benchers—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman could not find a fifth Minister——

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries) *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: Well, perhaps one among the five Back Benchers is disappointed that he was not returned to ministerial office. The Government have five Scottish Back Benchers who are opposed by 50 Labour Members, nine alliance Members — or whatever they are called now — and three SNP Members. The Tory party is a very small minority in Scotland. That is where the real constitutional question arises. It is not the West Lothian question.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the West Lothian question. What is his answer to it?

Mr. Maxton: I do not necessarily think that the West Lothian question would cause problems in the short term. Although I believe in Scottish devolution on its own, I also believe that we should decentralise the United Kingdom as a whole. Bit by bit, areas of England would want control over their affairs and, like Scotland, could have it, even if in a different format. The real pressure on our constitution is not the West Lothian question at some future assembly, but the fact that the Secretary of State represents a rump of opinion in Scotland and forces upon the Scottish people policies that they do not want—for example, in education, housing and local government, and with the privatisation of the electricity industry and the poll tax. Nobody in Scotland wants those policies. The people of Scotland have clearly rejected them.

Why should Scotland be governed by a Secretary of State—as the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale said, more or less the Prime Minister of Scotland — who is not elected? Indeed, rather than a Prime Minister, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is more like a governor-general.

Mr. Rifkind: Did the hon. Gentleman feel similar concern when England had to accept a Labour Government that it had not elected?

Mr. Maxton: That question shows that the Secretary of State fails to understand the British constitution. There is no English Department of state in the United Kingdom. There are British Departments of state and there are Irish, Scottish and Welsh Offices. That is the constitution, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman always fails to understand it.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must not try to obfuscate. He knows that, with the exception of 1945 and 1966, no Labour Government since the war have had a majority of English Members of Parliament. Yet no Labour Government or Labour Member accepted that they did not have a moral right to implement policies in England that had not been endorsed by the English electorate. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a point about the current political position and believes it to be a constitutional issue of principle, why does he not apply that same principle south of the border?

Mr. Maxton: I do not know why the right hon. and learned Gentleman intervened again, because I thought that I had just answered that question. I repeat that, constitutionally, there are no English Departments, only a United Kingdom Administration.

It is the anomalous position of the Conservative party and its administration in Scotland that is putting a strain on our constitution, not some future problem of an assembly and the so-called West Lothian — or

[Mr. Maxton]

Linlithgow—question. If the Secretary of State had any principles he would say to the Prime Minister, "I cannot govern Scotland; I do not have sufficient Members of Parliament to do so. As a democrat, I am not prepared to impose my will upon the Scottish people who do not want me and, therefore, if you want to keep the unity of the United Kingdom, we must give Scotland a Scottish assembly." That is what a democrat would say.

The Bill that the Labour party has presented is sensible, well-thought out and worked through in some detail. The people of Scotland have been consulted about it. Unlike any other party, we have our proposals on the table where people can see them. They are the proposals that the people of Scotland want. They do not want this Government. I call upon my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Government's wrecking amendment on the principle of devolution.

5.23 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is to be congratulated on at least keeping a straight face during his quite considerable and remarkable intellectual contortions, especially his position on the Bill put forward by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

The debate so far has highlighted two points. First, its timing—and I congratulate the alliance—is a piece of parliamentary one-upmanship for the Liberal party, which neatly slipped in ahead of the proposed debate on the Labour party's Bill. The Labour party eventually managed to table its Bill, the original date for that having been overtaken by the ambitions of English Labour Members to push Scottish business off the Order Paper. The debate has shown that the so-called pro-devolution forces are hopelessly split. The entire debate on the Opposition Benches has been an argument between the Labour and the Liberal parties. There is no consensus on devolution.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I assure the hon. Gentleman that the forces on the Labour side of the House are not split, but at least they are forces.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has just been wasting the time of the House. If he will listen to the arguments that I am about to put forward, even he might be convinced.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for Conservative Members constantly to walk about to try and make themselves look more numerous?

Mr. Stewart: I give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend find it extraordinary that somebody who constantly claims to be a pacifist should be worried about forces?

Mr. Stewart: I would be tempting your goodwill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I followed the logic of the excellent point made by my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Maxton: As the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is talking about divisions, perhaps he will tell the House where his right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) is?

Mr. Stewart: I am not responsible for the movements of my right hon. Friend. I am responsible for the movements of the hon. Member for Eastwood.

The second point shown by the debate—the leader of the Liberal party was honest about this — is that federalism is not on offer as a practical solution or plan. The right hon. Gentleman made it clear that Scotland should be first and that some form of devolution on an undefined time scale would follow for the rest of the United Kingdom. That is an important point. The Liberal party has not suggested a scheme of multilateral devolution covering the United Kingdom, but a single scheme for Scotland.

Much has been said about the motivation for a Scottish assembly. It is unquestionably popular with the chattering classes opposite. Naturally, it is popular with many politicians who see it as another avenue of jobs for the boys. For that reason, it is also popular with many people in the press. But the Labour party's motivation for a Scottish assembly has fundamentally changed. It is now seen to be designed, clearly and unequivocally, as a permanent Socialist power base which would challenge Westminster. That is why the hon. Member for Cathcart is sticking so firmly to his guns.

Mr. Galbraith *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: I have given way three times and many hon. Members wish to speak.

I now wish to deal with the number of hon. Members and their role. The leader of the Liberal party said, very honestly, that, if there were a Scottish assembly, the number of Scottish Members would have to be reduced to about 55 on a population basis. Logically, the reduction should be greater than that on the precedent of Northern Ireland, when Stormont existed, as there were then fewer Northern Ireland Members than would be justified on a population basis. That may be a point of detail, but what is not a point of detail, despite the fact that the Opposition tried to wriggle out of it, is the so-called West Lothian question. That matter is neither trivial nor theoretical.

Let us take the only plausible scenario as envisaged by the Labour party—a Labour Government which would try to deliver devolution. There would be 72 Scottish Members and all precedents, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, suggest that Labour would depend for its majority in this House on Scottish Members. The House is being asked, therefore, to agree to a situation in which Scottish and English Members would have no right to legislate on Scottish domestic legislation, but Scottish Members would have a right to vote decisively on English legislation against the wishes of the majority of English Members. I do not believe for a moment that that would be acceptable. The Labour party, in its heart of hearts, should admit that.

Mr. Galbraith *rose*——

Mr. Stewart: In the motion the Liberal party suggests a system of single tier local government in Scotland. I do not believe that moving from the present system to a single tier system would reduce expenditure. Every authority would need to have a chief constable and a director of education. I ask Opposition Members such as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell): do they imagine that Fife, North-East would survive as a separate district council under a single-tier system? Of

course, it would not and nor would Eastwood district council in my constituency, doubtless to the delight of the hordes of Socialists in surrounding areas. If the Liberal party is to pursue the idea of a single-tier system it will wipe out many small district councils which do a perfectly good and responsible job on behalf of their electorate.

Mr. Maxton: Does not the hon. Gentleman admit that smaller districts such as Eastwood are an anomaly? The people who live in the districts are almost all commuters into Glasgow. They commute for business, pleasure and leisure. They use Glasgow district council's facilities but pay not one penny towards them. Is that not an anomaly that ought to be recognised?

Mr. Stewart: I wholly reject the hon. Gentleman's assertions but I shall ensure that his comments are fully published in the *Eastwood Mercury* and the *Eastwood Extra*.

There are more fundamental questions. A Scottish assembly within a unitary state is a recipe for conflict between that assembly and Westminster. There would be a block grant to the assembly. Inevitably, every assembly man would say "It is not enough for my project and the reason why we cannot obtain a school extension is the miserliness of Westminster."

There would be revenue-raising powers under the proposals of the Liberal and the Labour parties. However, let us not be deluded as to what that would mean for the direction in which the levels of taxation would go. Of course, taxation would go up. No one could seriously suggest that taxation would go down. If the assembly had power over income tax that would go up. — */Interruption./* Despite the rumbles from Opposition Members, no one could believe other than that the Labour party wants an assembly with tax-raising powers in order to put up taxes.

Mr. Galbraith: We do not call Scottish assembly members "assembly persons"; we call them Scottish assembly Members — SAMs. Tax-raising powers mean the ability to vary tax. The hon. Gentleman is trying to maintain that that would always mean that there would be increases in tax. I am sure that the current Administration would wish to cut taxes and reduce services if they were to obtain power in Scotland. Therefore, is not the hon. Gentleman's assertion that taxes will always increase an implicit assumption that the Conservatives will never gain power in Scotland? Is not the Conservative party opposed to the assembly on political grounds?

Mr. Stewart: I am describing the ambitions of the Labour party for a Scottish assembly. The hon. Gentleman can hardly deny that the ambitions for an assembly would include an increase in the level of tax. Indeed, there is a clear disincentive in the Labour party's legislation for an assembly ever to endeavour to reduce taxes.

The Leader of the Opposition once said:

"Devolution reform will not provide a factory, a machine or jobs."

That is true. The assembly is a convenient panacea for every ill and every grievance, real or imagined. People say, "Wait until we have an assembly. That will solve the problems." In fact, it is a recipe for confusion, conflict and for placing the House in a position of immense constitutional difficulty.

I welcome this debate because the more the people of Scotland are faced with the realities of how an assembly would work and the more they are faced with the detailed questions as to what would happen, the more the support will evaporate and the more indifference will become opposition to such damaging proposals for Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

5.36 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has basically described the politics of fear. He did not come up with one constructive approach to the problems faced by the people of Scotland: the people of Scotland have to be frightened that there might be an increase in income tax; the people of Scotland have got to be afraid that there might be a reduction in the number of Scottish Members and that Scottish Members will be able to vote on English legislation while English Members will not be able to vote on similar legislation for Scotland. I have to tell the hon. Member for Eastwood that I have seldom heard a politician from Scotland who is so out of touch with the electorate in Scotland. None of those issues—I am speaking to my hon. Friends as well — will frighten the people of Scotland against the background of the terrible suffering that they have been subjected to since 1979.

I ungrudgingly give my thanks to the alliance for raising this subject today. It is important that we should use every opportunity on the Floor of the House to ventilate these serious constitutional problems. They are not matters of fun or jokes. The subject should be treated seriously, not in the way that it was treated by the Secretary of State. I give my thanks to the alliance for raising this issue on its Supply day.

Mr. Fairbairn: Join the alliance then.

Mr. Ewing: I shall never leave the Labour party, but if some day I were to have a brain seizure and had to choose between the alliance and the Conservative party, I can tell the hon. and learned Gentleman that I would not have any difficulty in making the choice.

Having given my thanks to the alliance for raising the subject, I have to say, honestly and sincerely, that I cannot support the motion that has been put before the House. It appears that the alliance has made proportional representation a prerequisite for all that it seeks. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) that, rightly or wrongly — I may be misjudging the alliance — the most important aspect of its policy is to secure proportional representation and that all other things fall into place after that. I cannot possibly accept that proposition.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and I remember when the House reformed Scottish local government in 1972-73. Hon. Members and Scottish people are inclined to forget that we had district councils, town councils, county councils, joint boards and all the rest of it. We moved from that three-tier system to the present two-tier system. I leave that as a mark of history to illustrate the point that, when we moved to the two-tier system, we halved the number of Scottish councils and doubled our bureaucracy. In other words, we reduced by 50 per cent. the democratically elected input into Scottish local government and, at the same time, doubled the number of bureaucrats. That has

[Mr. Ewing]

had a profound effect on local government not only in Scotland but, I suspect, throughout the rest of the United Kingdom where that system was adopted.

I am inevitably led to the conclusion that moving to a one-tier system, albeit with an elected assembly to preside over it, will further reduce the democratic input into local government. It would take a great deal to persuade me to favour a single-tier system of local government in Scotland. My position is quite clear. I could not possibly support the proposition. There are elements of the proposition that I can accept, but, because of the grounds that I have mentioned, I shall not accept it as a whole.

I may have been here too long and I am getting old, but, eight years ago, along with my hon. Friends, I would have been angry at the Secretary of State's speech. Today I feel nothing but pity for the man. I saw a man who had lost every ounce of credibility that he had ever built up in the Scottish political scene. I saw him throw away any integrity that he had in Scottish politics. It is not surprising that Scottish people have no respect for the Secretary of State for Scotland. The people of Scotland are not to blame for that; the Secretary of State has brought it upon his own head. Perhaps I should not say it—I may regret it later—but I find it difficult to understand how those who are charged with the responsibility of working for the Secretary of State can have any respect for him. He is a disgrace to himself and to Scotland. Today he argued that we in Scotland have separate education, housing and legal systems. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends not to take that argument for granted. We should not believe for a moment that the Scottish Office is not doing something about devolution. The Government and the Scottish Office are removing differences. Soon we shall not see any difference between the Scottish and English education systems.

For example, last week the Government put forward a proposal to start testing primary 4 and primary 7 children. That is alien to everything that we believe in Scotland, but it is completely consistent with almost everything that happens in England. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), has put forward a proposition in relation to school boards.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Where is he?

Mr. Ewing: He is probably at another meeting, trying to sell his proposals. I hope that he stays there.

The hon. Member for Stirling has peddled his propositions throughout the length and breadth of Scotland, including some of the strongest Tory areas in his constituency. Never once in all his campaigning has he gained majority support at any meeting. That will not deter him. He will bring forward propositions in the form of legislation and will remove another difference in our education system.

The Minister with responsibility for housing and planning in Scotland will reply to the debate. One could not imagine a more inoffensive, innocuous person. He would not hurt a fly. He will introduce housing proposals that, again, are completely alien to established Scottish housing policy. We talk about differences in our education, housing and legal systems. Down here, the Government are doing it the other way. England will move to an independent procurator fiscal system, to be in line with the Scottish system. Before this Parliament is finished, the differences will be unrecognisable. People will say, "Why do you want devolution? There is no difference between what happens in England and Scotland." We will have lost all our traditions in Scotland.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ewing: This is the first time that I have agreed that life is too short.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am fond of the hon. Gentleman, but he has got almost everything wrong. First, the Government have already introduced a separate Crown prosecution service in England. Secondly, that service is not working properly because they do not understand how to run it. Thirdly, the Home Secretary was keen to support Mr. Roy Jenkins, who got the credit for imitating what had been the characteristics of the law in Scotland for 500 years, such as the right of the defence to speak last, majority verdicts and a few other things. Let not the hon. Gentleman talk about the law in Scotland.

Mr. Ewing: I have never been able to take in on the spur of the moment anything that the hon. and learned Gentleman says. If he does not object, I shall read his remarks tomorrow and make sure that I understand exactly what he said. I should not like the hon. and learned Gentleman or anyone else to divert me from the few brief points that I shall make.

I have been pursuing my line of argument to convince my right hon. and hon. Friends that the Government are doing something about devolution. They are removing differences in education and housing and making Scotland the same as almost any other area in England. What is even worse is the Government's callous disregard for the people of Scotland, which has brought about the tensions that we are discussing.

Let us examine what happened at the last election. Defeated Tory Members of Parliament now find themselves in some of the most influential offices in Government. I refer to Peter Fraser. His electors rejected him, and the Prime Minister immediately appointed him as Solicitor-General, with a much bigger salary than he had when he was Solicitor-General in the Government. There was evidence of that at the previous election when Hamish Gray, now Lord Gray of Contin, was defeated by an SDP candidate, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). Almost the day after his defeat, he was appointed Minister of State, Scottish Office, which was a calculated insult to the people of Scotland.

On Friday, I listened to a BBC lunchtime radio programme in which the leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, took part. Also on that programme was Michael Ancram, who, while working for the BBC, has written a position paper on devolution. The phrase "position paper" simply means that the Government are not going to do anything. Mr. Ancram said on that programme that if we achieved devolution in Scotland it would become another Northern Ireland. Also on the programme was Michael Jenkin, who visited Scotland during the last election. He is the son of Patrick Jenkin, now Lord Jenkin, who used to be a Member, so I excuse him on the basis that he suffers from inherited stupidity. However, there is no excuse for Michael Ancram, because his comment about Scotland becoming another Northern Ireland was a deliberate insult to the people of Scotland.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Frightening.

Mr. Ewing: As my hon. Friend said, it is frightening. At the conclusion of the debate, the Minister has an obligation to dissociate both the Tory party in Scotland and the Government from that remark. If he does not, the Tory party in Scotland and the Government will be just as culpable as Michael Ancram.

Whatever discussion and debate takes place in the House, one thing is inevitable: we will have a devolved Parliament in Scotland in one form or another, and the form of that devolved Parliament will depend much on the reaction and approach of the Government. I vehemently oppose the proposition of the SDP. The Liberal party is in favour of a federal solution. I believe that there are strong arguments in favour of the proposals of the Labour party, published last week. However, there is no argument for standing still, for no change or for letting everything go on and making the people of Scotland suffer as they have suffered over the past nine or 10 years.

Many questions have been raised about the Linlithgow/West Lothian problem. The proposition that there is no solution to that problem is a proposition that devolution will stop at Scotland. I do not accept that. I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) that, once we have devolution in Scotland, we will lead the way and that the United Kingdom Parliament will become a devolved Parliament. In that event, the West Lothian/Linlithgow problem will not arise.

If Conservative Members, whether they represent Scottish or English constituencies, think that the solutions to the problems in Scotland can await a solution to the problems in England and Wales, they should think again. Time is not on our side. The Government have a crucial role to play. If Scotland goes down the road proposed by the SNP——

Mr. Allan Stewart *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ewing: The hon. Member for Eastwood is now on record as indicating that he prefers separation to devolution. He is nodding his head in agreement. It will not be the persuasive arguments of the SNP that will take us down that road; it will be due to the fact that the Tory party in Scotland has insulted the people of Scotland to such an extent that they are not prepared to accept any more. The responsibility for any extreme measures taken by the people of Scotland will not be——

Mr. Allan Stewart: What does the hon. Gentleman mean by that?

Mr. Ewing: I mean separation. The hon. Gentleman should contain himself. I allowed him to intervene because I could see that he was getting excited. If the people of Scotland go down that extreme road, the Secretary of State for Scotland, his Ministers and those Scottish Tories who sit on their hands and say, "We will rub this into the people of Scotland", will be responsible.

I shall not embarrass the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) by quoting the speech that he made at the weekend, but if Conservative Members will not pay attention to me—and I do not complain about that—they should pay attention to what their right hon. Friend said at Banchory on Friday: that, at best, the Tory party's policies are an insult to the people of Scotland and, at worst, they are irrelevant. The quicker the Government get off their hands and grant us a Scottish assembly, the quicker we will get on with the job of rebuilding the Scottish economy.

5.56 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is difficult to follow a speech of such vitriolic meaninglessness. I pay a deserved tribute to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for his honesty and bravery in saying on television at the weekend that the purpose of our assembly, whether it is devolved or whether it is in Westminster, is to entertain democratic debate. I believe in all honesty and sincerity that his words should be welcomed by all hon. Members in our democratic Parliament. I hope that I do not embarrass the hon. Gentleman by saying that I think he gave a message to all of us to pause and be wise, and to discuss our affairs with responsibility and restraint.

Mr. Foulkes: Next Speaker.

Mr. Fairbairn: I hope that the next Speaker will not be the hon. Gentleman.

Nobody is more informed than the leader of whatever party it is at the moment, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) about the future government of Scotland. However, it is quite obvious from his speech that he has not read the debates of 1706. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. and learned Gentleman was there."] Labour Members should take this seriously. If they listen, they may learn something. None of those who claim to speak for Scotland know where the Gordons were in that debate. It was clear that the leader of the Liberal party had not read the debate. If he had done so, he could have answered my question. We should be accurate when dealing with the historical position of Scotland.

I am able to comprehend the attitude of the Scottish National party. It says that it wants to return to a unitary state in Scotland, but that did not exist in 1707. That was created by General Wade after 1745. The concept of a unitary state in Scotland is a fantasy. It is something that did not exist during the period to which the SNP wants to return. In those days Scotland was populated by Scots, but that is no longer the position. Scotland is half populated now by Irish people and greatly populated by English people. There are many races in Scotland. It is no longer the homeland for the Scots. Let us be humble in our concept of the quiescent right of a people. There are 10 times as many Scots outside Scotland as in it. There are 10 times as many Scots in Holland as there are in Scotland. In Canada—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members who say "Havers, man!" should consult the telephone directory for Schravenhagen to ascertain the number of MacKays who are living in that area.

We falsify history if we imagine that what was a thing of the past should be a thing of the future. We shall not return to Wessex, Northumbria and Mercia. We shall not return to a Europe before the movement of the Goths, the Visigoths and the Huns.

There is a romantic fantasy about the kingdom of Scotland. The kingdom was united with England after seven previous attempts had been made to achieve that unity — *[Interruption.]* It is obvious to me that Opposition Members are neither interested in the history of Scotland nor know anything about it. However, they claim to speak for Scotland.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The hon. and learned Gentleman has said that half the population of Scotland are Irish. For how long do people have to be in Scotland before he is prepared to consider them as Scots? Is everybody to be judged and divided according to ethnic origins?

Mr. Fairbairn: The industrial revolution of Scotland could never have happened but for the potato famine in Ireland, when cheap labour from Ireland was responsible for the building of Glasgow. I am not saying that a person who has been in a country other than his own for a long time cannot be regarded as a member of the country in which he is living. I merely say that the idea of a homeland for those who are purely Scots is a fallacy.

Mr. Buchan: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way on a historical point?

Mr. Fairbairn: No, I shall not give way. I wish to deal with the fantasy that has been proposed to us by the leader of the Liberal party.

Mr. Maxton: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall give way in a moment.

I thought that the speech of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) was facile and fatuous. Let us take the concept—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members were interested in the advice given to them, they would listen. There is the concept that regional government must lead to political representation. I can understand the historic concept of the SNP although I do not agree with it, but it must be tested. The capital of Scotland used to be in Perthshire. That is where the Scottish kings were crowned. Perthshire is ruled in this place by Conservative Members. The Liberal party advances a federal principle. Is it saying that we should restore the grand kingdom of Perth? Is it the idea that we should have the kingdom of Fife? If we find that there are political differences, is it right that we should have the kingdom of Inverskiething and the barony of Fordell as separate political institutions? We must understand the arguments that are being advanced—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are far too many sedentary interjections.

Mr. Fairbairn: When a political argument is lost, what national, regional or other excuses can be made in ascertaining whether there is a small part of the line-up, as it were, that can be made one's own behind what is called devolution, which those who are familiar with Latin will understand is a winding down?

Let us be clear of the effect that devolution would have on Scotland. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made the position clear. Scotland has a population of 5·5 million and a huge land surface when compared to that of the rest of the United Kingdom, and it is expensive. Scotland enjoys £127 per head for every £100 that is spent on those south of the border. Scotland has roads and transport facilities which those south of the border do not enjoy. To talk about the problems of Scotland being greater than those of the south-east of England is to draw a false political conclusion.

My right hon. and learned Friend has said that devolution would add to government. I do not know any elector who wants more government or who wants to get closer to it. I do not know anyone who wants more taxation and not less. If the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), who is shaking her head, had been in the House at the time, would she have voted that the 2p reduction in income tax should not have been introduced and that the moneys that were to be forgone by the Treasury should have been directed instead to the unemployed? How many Liberals have sent back that rise?

Mr. Foulkes: Post early for Christmas.

Mr. Fairbairn: As the hon. Gentleman says, we should post early for Christmas, because his beloved unions will stop the post altogether.

Scotland is a small country. It is no good the neurologist, the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), shaking his head——

Mr. Galbraith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have just been called a neurologist. Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that neurologists do not do anything, unlike someone such as myself who uses his many and varied talents?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has set the record straight.

Mr. Fairbairn: The electors of Edinburgh, Strathclyde, Tayside and Dundee know that they would suffer from increased taxation. However, there is a belief that it would be nice to have a toy, a Government of our own, but, once we had, it would quickly go to the back of the toy cupboard. Socialism is not about providing services; it is about providing bureaucracy, and making other people pay for what Labour Members want to be popular. That is what Socialism is about and that is what Scotland would be about.

As someone who understands and has bothered to read the history of Scotland, which mocking Labour Members have not, I do not want our independent nation to be a place in which Socialists can hold power. As the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) said, the Labour party is threatened by our reforms in education and housing because the last Socialist grip on the political scene in Scotland will be abolished. If the hon. Gentleman seriously imagines that those reforms will do other than improve education and housing, he is wrong.

We are independent; Scotland has benefited enormously — economically, politically and in every other way—by joining the Union in 1707 and by the reforms that resulted from the two Jacobite risings. Any concept of devolution involves returning not to the little puddle but to the south sea bubble. We would be going back in history. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the people of Scotland will listen to and read this debate. Labour Members should know that mocking the history of our country will not help. What would happen if Scots agreed with the lunacy of this concept of devolution? We would become a little country outside the United Kingdom, unrepresented by the Secretary of State, unrepresented in the Cabinet and unrepresented in the House. Scotland would then surely pay the price of the petty-minded fools on the Labour Benches.

6.14 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall not follow the weird and wonderful ramblings of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). As his speech continued, it was obvious that he was talking about nationalism and independence. The

motion on the Order Paper in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Liberal party and my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and myself concerns devolution in the sense of a Scottish Parliament, not in the sense that the hon. and learned Gentleman appeared to be suggesting. While he may vent his feelings about nationalism, if he so wishes, it must be put on record that he was not dealing in a relevant way with the motion.

The Secretary of State warned about the inherent dangers of the motion that we have proposed, particularly —he used these words—because it constituted unilateral action. In that regard he dealt with what he perceived as a central concern or objection to the rolling proposals that the alliance favours for federalism throughout the United Kingdom. I must tell the Minister that it would not involve unilateralist action, because, given the separate legal system in Scotland, we acknowledge that it can move towards devolved decision-making and political power at an earlier stage. We believe that that is a prerequisite for the further devolution of regions of England and for a Welsh senate or Parliament. The Secretary of State is inaccurate in talking about the unilateralist nature of our proposals.

The Secretary of State addressed himself to the West Lothian question and spoke of it as the greatest constitutional problem that could arise. He completely ignored the point that was made about what pertained when, for 50 years, Members of Parliament from Ireland enjoyed the rights as hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said would be so wrong for Scottish Members in this context. Of course, that position in Ireland led to a diminution in the number of Members of Parliament from Ireland — we have acknowledged that part and parcel of our proposed reforms would also involve that—and to the loss of an Irish Secretary of State, but we have said that the office of Secretary of State for Scotland would become redundant in every sense given the reforms that we want to make. As to the debates of that half-century, I am sure that the Tory party was not then devoting so much of its attention to the voting rights of Irish Members because, as history shows, more often than not those parties and politicians sided with the Conservative and Unionist party. That is the inconsistency in the argument that is advanced by Conservative Members.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Northern Ireland parallel is not an exact one, because seldom, if ever, were Northern Ireland votes crucial to the Government of the day? There were only 12 Irish Members. Does he agree also that the right to vote was challenged by the Opposition on a number of Bills, particularly those relating to the nationalisation of the steel industry? The crucial difference is whether the votes are likely to be crucial to the Government in power.

Mr. Kennedy: I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's seriousness, but I consider that to be a very dodgy, indeed flawed, basis on which to address a constitutional position in any parliamentary assembly. The hon. Gentleman appears to be arguing that the extent of an elected Member's individual rights is liable to be curtailed, depending on the degree of influence exerted by the overall outcome of his decisions. That is a most dubious principle on which to approach any democratic or constitutional issue.

The Secretary of State's third argument was the most depressing of all—the taxation argument. He spoke of an inevitable tax increase if our proposal went through, pointing out that we were now talking about direct taxation-raising powers, as opposed to the block grant that was debated 10 years ago.

The Secretary of State is not remaining true to the philosophical argument that he is currently advancing in Scotland. He has argued with some intellectual force since the election that the position has changed under a Conservative Government, not least in Scotland. Scotland is historically more dependent on state benefits. Its dependency can also be seen in the level of council house ownership. But the rights that the Secretary of State has seen the Government confer are now becoming responsibilities. We see the philosophical and political contrast between the right to buy a council house and the responsibility, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman would argue, in the exercise of parental control and choice in education.

The Conservative approach, which the Secretary of State has spelt out, is that the Government have moved on to the second phase of reform: greater individual responsibility, rather than merely the taking of greater individual rights. Surely one of the most basic responsibilities—particularly for those of us who argue for direct representation in Scotland—is "No taxation without representation." If we believe, as the Secretary of State believes that the Scots should become more responsible, we must face our accountability in electing the parties and the controlling body within an assembly. That will have immediate fiscal consequences. I do not believe that the Scots are incapable of facing the consequences of manifestos, and of party political programmes and promises, which may involve higher taxation. It must be a decision for the electorate at the ballot box.

Let us concede every one of the Government's arguments. If the Scots were so pathologically opposed to tax increases, and if the Conservatives were the only party standing on a programme that did not involve tax increases, I should have thought that there would be a strong case for them to do very well—indeed better than they anticipate—at the elections. The Secretary of State is not being consistent. Given his own rhetorical track record on the issue, the slippery shift that he tried to perform in his speech is further belied.

Let me make two final points. The first concerns the single-tier local authority. The hon. Member for Eastwood spoke about how sad it would be if Eastwood ceased to be a local authority. I was interested in the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), who said that it would be quite reasonable for Eastwood to go, as everyone tended to commute into the city of Glasgow anyway. The only equivalent that I can give is probably Skye and Lochalsh district council—although I cannot say that most people within its boundaries always commute to Inverness.

The hon. Gentleman is out of touch if he seriously believes that the existing redrawn local government boundaries in Scotland are popular or make people feel part of the communities that they belonged to within the old boundaries. In reforming into single-tier, all-purpose authorities such as already exist in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland, we seek to simplify the system and bring decision-making closer, in a simplified form, to the communities that we wish to see represented. In that way

[Mr. Kennedy]

we can avoid the major objection to any form of devolution that is not linked to a reform of the existing local authority system—the imposition of an extra tier of decision-making and bureaucracy—which, ironically, would probably be a further step away from the electorate, whose chances and rights of representation we all supposedly wish to improve.

Finally, let me touch on proportional representation. A new and fascinating argument has been deployed tonight by the Labour party. It is that the alliance, being fixed in principle to proportional representation, will set in train a chain of events that will discriminate against rural areas. I have not heard that one before, and I must compliment whoever dreamt it up as the latest way of saving the Labour party a degree of embarrassment. I think that I detected from the generous speech of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) that Labour Members are so in favour of devolution that they obviously cannot vote for the motion tonight.

It is clear from the results of the last election in Scotland that under-representation in rural areas has been magnified by first-past-the-post politics. Let me appeal to the Labour party's self-interest. If Labour Members want the best of both worlds, which they are perfectly entitled to want—if they want a Scottish assembly, but at the same time want the chance of ousting the United Kingdom Conservative Government on a future occasion—they should do what many of the constituency parties at the Labour conference have begun to realise they must do and embrace proportional representation.

I speak as one who would very much like to see the Government removed from office, but who does not think that the Labour party can achieve that by itself at the next election in the current political circumstances. *[Interruption.]* I am shocked to observe that the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) is reading a News International newspaper. What about solidarity with the comrades of Wapping? At least he was not reading page three.

The Labour party should recognise its own interest in embracing proportional representation. It is doubly disappointing that it will not take the first tentative step by recognising it in Scotland. Surely it makes sense geographically. If there is a referendum and we want to sell the idea of a Scottish Parliament to the Scots it will be a great deal easier to sell that idea in the Highlands, the borders, parts of Grampian and the Islands—in other words, around the peripheral areas where there is fear, rightly or wrongly, of central belt domination by the Labour party. That may be through ignorance in those areas of the Labour party, which has proportionally few representatives in them.

If the Labour party wants to get the maximum support for devolution, it should embrace PR. That would operate to its considerable benefit among communities that would be reticent if they felt that they were simply handing over political control to the central belt. Therefore, I urge the Labour party to look in that direction.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does my hon. Friend accept that it is not healthy for politics if the Labour party, with a few honourable exceptions, is excluded from the rural areas of Scotland, while the Conservative party is excluded from the urban areas of Scotland? Would not proportional representation solve that problem?

Mr. Kennedy: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him for his intervention. In the last Parliament there were thousands of voters in the Highlands and Islands who were not represented by the Labour party, and there is not a single Conservative Member who represents one of the city of Glasgow's constituencies. The result is that loyal members of the Conservative and Labour parties find that they are completely unrepresented.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I fear that I should go back down a route that I have already traversed if I were to give way at this stage to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

I commend the proposals to the House. They are practical and equitable. Most important of all, they would be for the general good of the government of Scotland, and at the end of the day that is more important than partisan, party political advantage. Despite the large number of seats that it holds in Scotland, I appeal to the Labour party not to overlook the argument that there should be an all-party organisation that embraces Scottish Members of the Conservative party in order to help us to advance a principle upon which we should be able to agree. It is in that spirit that we have put forward our proposals, and we commend them to the House.

6.31 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome the debate. I welcome also the fact that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) adopted a much less dogmatic approach to the issue—except, perhaps, on proportional representation. Far too many hon. Members have adopted too firm an approach to an issue that must be debated. It is unfortunate that in recent years there has not been informed debate either in the House or in the Scottish Grand Committee, although there is so much to be discussed before a solution can be found. I accept that we cannot reach a conclusive decision today, because of the immense amount of conflicting advice on the issue. Some of that advice is authentic, but some of it is hare-brained.

Those who advocate major constitutional change have to prove that it will be advantageous. I have heard no conclusive evidence today from Opposition Members that leads me to believe that in the long run Scotland would benefit from their proposals. The future of our country is too important for emotion to become a substitute for fact.

I do not intend to treat lightly the Opposition's proposals. Scotland's future is far too important for that. I am sorry that there have been some flippant and light-hearted contributions from the Opposition Benches, because this is a serious matter. However, one could knock the Opposition's incompetence over their tactics in recent months. I expected every Labour Member with a Scottish constituency who felt a burning desire to do something for Scotland to be here today, yet only 17 out of the feeble 50 have been on parade. That does not bode well for devolution.

What happened on 11 November did not bode well for the Labour party. It made so many mistakes that the business of the day was lost, including the Labour party's

Bill. It is wrong to con the Scottish people into believing that a Labour party Bill can be legislated for in this Parliament and that eventually it will become an Act of Parliament. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members should know that, although a Labour party Bill can be debated on an Opposition day, or introduced under the ten-minute Bill procedure, the possibility of it making progress is absolutely nil. The people of Scotland have been misdirected into believing that to debate a Labour party Bill on an Opposition day means that eventually it will become an Act.

The Scottish National party has spoilt its case by continually overstating its position. It is determined to have independence for Scotland. The arrogance and the intolerance of the Scottish National party's candidates at the election did them no good at all. The Labour party and the other Socialist-minded parties based too much of their assembly and independence campaign on the supposition that the Scottish people want an assembly. I accept that at the last election 1·5 million more people in Scotland voted for the Labour party and for the other Socialist-minded parties than voted Conservative.

The parties that promised in their manifestos that there would be an assembly or independence for Scotland obtained the vast majority of the votes. However, it has not been proved that that was the reason why people voted for the Labour party and the other Socialist-minded parties. Earlier this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said that 96 per cent. of those who were interviewed in a poll said that an assembly was fairly low down on their list of priorities.

Voting trends are a subject for debate, but they are not completely relevant to this debate. The Conservative party in Scotland must debate why we did not heed the warning of the 1983 election, when the landslide in England did not produce an additional seat in Scotland for the Conservative party. My party must solve that problem in the not too distant future.

We have made splendid economic progress since 1979, and during the last 12 months there has been a steady fall in unemployment. We have a long way to go yet, but we are moving strongly in the right direction. That will encourage the people of Scotland to support the Conservative party. We put Scotland first, which is more than can be said of any other party in this House, and the party that puts Scotland first is the one that will be supported by the people of Scotland. Ministers should concentrate on that fact. They should endeavour to win hearts and minds. They must give higher priority to that endeavour than to the wish to introduce legislation. A lasting success can rarely be won in a world of conflict without leaving dissatisfaction and bad feeling behind.

Where do we go now? Hon. Members are aware that we are debating four options today. The first option is that we remain as we are, with the success of more effective devolution judged by the results. The second option is an assembly with powers to raise tax. Inevitably, taxes would rise under such an assembly. I was astonished at the way in which Opposition Members seemed to believe that if the assembly had an additional taxation power, taxes could conceivably decrease. Everyone knows that Socialist parties which support that view always raise taxes and there is every reason to believe that that would happen again under option two.

Dr. Reid: As the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about taxation and possible tax increases, will he confirm that the average family in Scotland is now paying £27 a week more in tax—and I include direct and indirect tax—than when the Conservative Government came to office, that its services have become worse, and that it has less control over its own affairs?

Sir Hector Monro: I cannot confirm that because I do not have the facts before me. Of course incomes have risen substantially and therefore taxation has gone up substantially. However, it is more important to note that the standard of living is much higher now than it ever was before and inflation is down to a very low level. Those two factors combined make living in Scotland much better than it was in the past.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to confirm that when the Conservative party came to office the industrial wage in Scotland was the lowest in any part of Britain, but it is now the highest.

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that valuable piece of information.

In relation to option two about the assembly, when we have had meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Scotland to give the Scottish people a feel of what an assembly might be like the meetings have been singularly poorly attended by hon. Members and by the general public. More importantly, all hon. Members who have attended and spoken in the Scottish Grand Committees in Edinburgh would agree that there has been disappointing press coverage to debate the issues in Scotland. Even the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) would agree that all hon. Members receive poor coverage in the press when taking part in the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh. That does not speak well for the opportunity for debates in Edinburgh.

The third option relates to an assembly tied in with a federal system. It is wrong to consider Scotland on a par with the regions of England and Wales. Scotland is a nation and we must never consider it as a region equated with any other area of the United Kingdom.

The fourth option relates to the alternative——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: Many other hon. Members want to speak in the debate tonight. I have already given way frequently and I want to get on with my speech with as few interruptions as possible.

The fourth option involves the stepping stone to independence——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it proper in this House for hon. Members to refer to Wales as a region of England?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): That is not a point of order. I deprecate bogus points of order which only delay the debate.

Sir Hector Monro: Of course Wales is not a region. Everyone knows that it is a nation. When that nation comes to Murrayfield to play rugby football we will deal with it.

The fourth option is the stepping stone to independence. No one in Scotland wants to go down that route. Whatever option is adopted, with the exception of the first

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option, it will result in a fundamental constitutional change and a gamble of the highest possible risk which may take years to settle down and show any economic or social advantage. Meanwhile, administrative devolution would stop. There would be a double loss of progress in an endeavour to reach a fundamentally unsound goal.

What should we do? As with the Irish statement, "I wouldn't start from here." However, we must start from here. We have heard from Kilbrandon, Wheatley and Douglas-Home. Indeed, we have had many other reports, all of which hon. Members will have studied. I was none too enthusiastic about local government reform and that is important in terms of the Liberal party motion today.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I have already told Opposition Members that I want to get on with my speech.

The consequences of local government reform will have reduced the chances of an assembly being formed. I refer of course to local authority areas of all Scotland, not of one region or district. There was much good in the old set-up of local government, especially in connection with the county councils and small burghs. The town councils, provosts and councillors were an important part of the local community and set a very fine leadership example. They provided a focal point in the community which we have lost — although there are one or two notable exceptions.

Local government today is too impersonal, political and interested in the next election. Indeed, when local government is linked with COSLA it is too monolithic. It makes the man in the street shy away from an additional layer of bureaucratic control through an assembly. There could have been a half-way house, but now that would mean restructuring local government. In the 1970s the Scottish Office was very much hooked on the estuarial theory of regions round the Clyde, Forth and Tay which of course subsequently had to be modified in legislation when Fife became a region. Indeed, there was also a good case then for Ayr to be a region, and for Argyll to be in the Highland region.

Whatever form an assembly may take, we must have a national discussion about the future of local government at the same time. There must be a determined effort through local government to promote local leadership and responsibility at grass roots. Only then will we see a contented local community upon which a successful nation will thrive. Therefore, the debate must be widened, not only to deal with devolution in an assembly, but with the relationship between that assembly and local government.

I abstained in the votes on this legislation in the 1970s. Like my hon. Friends, I believed that there was a good point to examine in terms of the assembly, but we dodged the issue of the financial implications of the assembly at that time. I have been particularly disappointed at the progress and development of local government since the 1970s and I believe that the relationship between COSLA, local authorities and the Scottish Office does not seem to be an ideal platform from which to launch an assembly. That is why I plead with hon. Members to consider a much broader brush in terms of the total government of Scotland than the present assembly superimposed on everything else — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members seem to be losing enthusiasm for considering local government. Local government is, after all, part of the motion before the House today. Therefore, it is right that we should stress the importance of the relationship from the ground upwards, as the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) said, of our elected representatives from district and regional councils and below them in community councils and other valuable appointed bodies such as health councils. Simply imposing an assembly with no changes lower down would make Scotland over-governed. I urge that we consider that carefully.

We have had Royal Commissions. Heaven forbid that we have another. It is important to come to a conclusion fairly soon so that the Scottish people, Scottish industry and commerce and the Scottish financial world know where they are. Then we can go forward constructively together as one nation determined to do its best.

From what I have heard today, and for some years, about politics in Scotland I doubt whether the Scottish people want to take the step towards an assembly. We cannot govern by emotion alone. We have to be practical and look in great detail at how we should carry out the proposals if we are to go forward.

I think that the best way forward for the continued success of this Government in Scotland is by demonstrating that the present devolved powers are adequate and that they will achieve economic and social success. Achieving practical results over the years, under Labour and Conservative Governments, is the most effective means of showing that the present way is the right way. Only if conclusive evidence is found — we have not heard it today — should we widen the debate. At this moment I am unmoved. I shall be convinced that the present system is the best until proved otherwise.

6.51 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): If ever there was an argument for shift and change in Scotland, we heard it in the last two speeches from the Government Benches. We heard a lying-in-state speech from the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). There has been a double-pronged attack, and I shall have news of that for the House later. We also heard the historical exercise delivered by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who, having explained that Scotland was full of Scots, complained about the presence of the Irish. He must have forgotten that the Scots were Irish. We listened with patience. We needed it.

I confess that I am disappointed with the motion. I had hoped for a motion that would unite the House — apart from the troglodytes on the Government Benches — but we did not get that. We have heard speeches in defence of a motion the first priority of which is not to unite the people of Scotland or even to achieve devolution, but to deal with proportional representation. The motion is not about the devolution of power, but about the first step towards devolution being the need to establish proportional representation.

The motion is not about the people of Scotland. It does not even state that devolution is an important step. It is a call to support idiosyncratic attitudes to voting systems.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Kilbrandon commission, which the Labour party set up, recommended proportional representation. To say that that is idiosyncratic does the royal commission an injustice.

Mr. Buchan: There is no need to identify the Government who established a royal commission. The royal commission covered a great deal of ground and has been the spur to much of the thinking on the subject. We do not accept every aspect of the commission's report. Of course it is idiosyncratic. It is a particular identifiable concept belonging to a particularly identifiable party. The royal commission is not represented in the House, but fortunately my party is.

I do not wish to explore the whole aspect of proportional representation, but some hon. Members seem to think that PR is a better democratic method of voting than first-past-the-post in particular constituencies and groupings of constituencies. That is nonsense.

First, PR puts too much power in the hands of the parties. Secondly, it frequently fails to achieve a Government, as we have seen in Italy. We cannot even get the Italian President to visit us. Thirdly, PR does not allow continuity of political attitudes after an election. The first thing that a party has to say after a PR election is, "Forget all that we promised you. We are going into coalition with another two parties." The power of democracy ends on election day. PR is a fraud, a nonsense and a mathematical nix.

The background to the debate is that Britain is the most centralised democratic state in western Europe, and perhaps in the world. I can think of no other state which, in its constitutional structure, is more centralised than Britain. There are one or two exceptions. One is Northern Ireland, but that is a phenomenon resulting from historical events and the historical accident of failing to solve the Irish problem before the first world war. Another is the long, historical and noble tradition of Scotland and its ability to look after its own affairs within a highly centralised state. As the state has developed and become more complex, it has intervened more so that that centralisation has become more and more crucial to our democracy.

The truth is that this Government — a Government who came to power on the slogan of returning power to the people, which they thought could be done by extending share ownership — have become the most centralising and the most statist Government. They have claimed to bring back democracy and to strip power from central Government, but they have increased that power many times over.

The Government have removed democratic control from large stretches of our economy — from the nationalised industries — claiming that to be in the interests of the people. An example is British Telecom. By removing the democratic process, the Government have created a coalition of power between Government and Ministers — not Parliament — and the few shareholders. They have gathered wealth and power in that way.

In politics, the means of expression has been whittled down. Political expression in the press is now in three hands — Maxwell, Murdoch and Stevens. The Government stand aside when Murdoch takes over yet another wall of the popular press and say, "After all, it is like the housemaid's baby, it is only little." That is the state of the monopoly.

That is an example of the monopolies that have grown up. The Government said that the 3 per cent. did not matter and ignored the 35 per cent. There has been an accretion of power to the centre and to a few very wealthy people based in the City of London and elsewhere. Social affairs, too, have been centralised. The Government have hammered at the means of providing social works such as education and health, while stripping democratic power from the people. In education we have witnessed the combination of so-called parental power, which in fact means giving power to exclusive groups of schools, and a national curriculum. Above all, we are witnessing centralisation on the constitutional front as the Government attack the power of local government throughout the country. This is the most dangerously centralising Government that we have yet seen.

It is against that background that the demand for elements of devolution is being made. I do not want to go into the motion in too much detail. However, I shall refer to some of the remarks that have been made about the subject. I remember vividly the debates surrounding the referendum, because I raised the question of the referendum. I wanted the referendum to contain two questions, one on devolution, and one on independence. I believe that if we got the 1979 Bill through without tax-raising powers the crisis that would be caused within a few years would break the unity of this country. Without tax-raising powers the assembly would have been able to ask for everything and blame London alone for its failure to get it. No one in the assembly would have been responsible in the sense of having to raise money, and the assembly would not have had to put its money where its mouth was.

No assembly man would be able to resist making demands. No one could stand up and say, "We do not want the steelworks to come to Scotland" or "I do not want that school in my constituency." Like all representatives, the representatives in the assembly would have to ask for those things, but they would not be responsible for raising the money to pay for them. As we were failing to achieve the tax-raising powers in the Bill, the only way of preventing a rapid move towards a split was to have a second question in the referendum. I did not achieve my aim, and I eventually voted against the referendum despite my continuing arguments in the House in favour of the Bill. I did so because I believed that there would be a split.

We have now got it right in a number of ways; above all, because we have included tax-raising powers. I cannot understand the fear and economic illiteracy of those Conservative Members who have argued against giving the assembly financial powers — whether to raise or to lower taxation. As a Socialist I know what I shall wish it to do, because I believe in doing good through the expenditure of public money in the interests of the people of this country. It has been argued, "The chambers of commerce object" and "The shareholders object". "They would, wouldn't they?" Such groups have been backing up this Government in some of their worst attacks on the well-being of people over the past seven years.

There is an element of economic illiteracy in the argument, because the taxes that such groups are concerned with are corporate and company taxes. If I were an executive with a firm in England, I would not worry about my income tax if I were shifted from London up to Glasgow. I would not worry that I might have to pay more, because, for one thing, I would not be paying the enormous house prices that I would have to pay in London. Many factors, apart from income tax, can hurt people's pockets. The companies are concerned that the

[Mr. Buchan]

nature of corporate taxation should be the same throughout the country, and we have never challenged that. That is a different argument.

If there is one tax that should be a cause of concern —and this is perhaps the second reason why we hardly need a referendum this time, now that we have seen the nature of this centralising Government—is the poll tax. The need for giving Scotland the power to deal with its internal affairs is nowhere more evident than in the financing of local government in Scotland. Scotland would never have adopted such a crazy and irrational scheme as the poll tax scheme. The poll tax was introduced because the Tory leadership was in a panic about losing the next election in Scotland. The Government therefore brought in this hasty, stupid, unfair, unjust, illogical, immoral and unwanted measure. The poll tax would be rejected by any party meeting in a Scottish assembly. Even the Tory party meeting in Edinburgh would never introduce such a scheme.

I do not know whether the Scottish National party supports the Bill. It does not go far enough for the SNP.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I have not yet had a chance to speak.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) has not yet had a chance to speak, and I welcome her to the debate now.

The SNP has not been very forthcoming about how helpful it intends to be in the campaign for devolution or in the campaign against the poll tax. I do not have much belief in parties that call for direct action and illegal action to be led by other people. That does not give me much encouragement. That is what the SNP does. SNP Members say, "Look Norman, why do your people not lead us in a great campaign of non-payment of tax?". My answer to that is, "If you are so keen, why do you not lead the campaign yourself? Why should I ask my people?". Such action may be right. None of us yet knows what shifts the people of Scotland will be pushed into by the strictures of this Government.

Perhaps something will have to be done, but I certainly do not intend to call upon other people to take action that we do not propose to take ourselves. That is a shameful attitude on the part of the SNP. Last time the SNP took direct action, one of its members broke a window in the Royal high school and then sat in the dark with a bandage round one hand and made a speech to the darkness. We are not really in the business of breaking mere wee windaes. That is not a form of direct action to which we can subscribe.

I said earlier that we had been subjected to a double-pronged attack. Conservative Members have attacked us in the House and, God help us all, someone else has been let loose today in Scotland. We thought that things in Scotland were bad because we had unemployment and were paying tax, but now the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been let loose upon us. I have here a report which says:

"Chancellor Nigel Lawson today painted an upbeat picture of a soon-to-be-booming Britain when he preached the Government's gospel of enterprise zeal to Labour dominated Scotland. The British economy was 'sounder and stronger' . . . he told businessmen at a private lunch in Glasgow . . . 'The only real threat to Scotland is the entrenchment of the anti-enterprise culture. All those who wish greater prosperity for Scotland should strive to expunge the ghost of dependence and embrace the spirit of enterprise . . . The puzzling thing is that Scotland's most assiduous denigrators are Scots themselves! Mr. Lawson's visit coincided with the launch in Glasgow today of a 'hearts and minds' campaign by his party to woo voters in urban Clydeside . . . Mr. Lawson told his audience that today's CBI survey was the first to show the state of British industry after the world stock market collapse—and the picture it painted was 'profoundly encouraging'."

At the bottom of the page it says "More" so I shall look for more. The report goes on:

"The economy of Scotland itself had made 'great advances', but Mr. Lawson complained: 'You would not get that impression from those who wish to run Scotland down.' . . . unemployment was falling, and Scottish living standards were higher".

The Chancellor said that manufacturing productivity had risen and that manufacturing output was going "from strength to strength". However, he added:

"The enterprise spirit North of the Border was frequently swamped by an overriding sense of dependence on the state."

He went on to say:

"'powerful forces of change' were at work including ownership . . . of shares."

After the events of the past three weeks the Chancellor has travelled 400 miles to try to encourage us hard-headed small-pocketed Scots to buy shares. The report then says, "More" again, and the Chancellor concluded:

"The policies that have brought growing prosperity to other parts of the United Kingdom will work in Scotland too."

This double-pronged attack — the lying-in state speech of the hon. Member for Dumfries and the profusion of utterances by a Chancellor who goes north of the border, mad with success—is why the Scottish people say, "Enough is enough." We cannot get rid of the Government too quickly. In the meantime, let us mobilise the people of Scotland. I had hoped that the Liberals and the SNP would show that they wanted to mobilise in a united fight to get rid of the poll tax and the nonsensical centralised concept of privatising housing. There must be some sane Members of the Tory party—though it is difficult to believe it—who would join us in a campaign to return the government of Scotland to the people of Scotland. This cannot come too quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bill Walker.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I genuinely seek your guidance. Is it in order for a Conservative Back Bencher, who was not present when the leader of the Liberal party moved the motion or when the Secretary of State for Scotland moved a Government amendment and who came into the Chamber halfway through the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) to be called in advance of the many Opposition Members who have sat through the entire debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has to take many factors into account in determining which hon. Member should be called. Those matters are at the Chair's discretion, and must not be challenged in this manner.

7.10 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): If the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) had been more patient, she would have realised that I came into the Chamber late for a good reason. I was in my constituency attending an engagement

that had been arranged a considerable time ago. It was the opening of a new factory in my constituency. The hon. Lady often says that one of our prime duties is to bring jobs to Scotland. That is what I was doing and why I was not able to be present at the beginning of the debate. I apologise to the leader of the Liberal party—the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). I should have liked to be present but, unfortunately, could not be here. I am delighted to be able to inform the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) that the reason I was able to open that factory today — the second such factory to be opened in my constituency in the small town of Forfar——

Mr. Buchan: At what time did the hon. Gentleman open it?

Mr. Walker: I opened the factory at 11.30 am. If the hon. Gentleman is aware of the difficulties involved in getting from my constituency to here, he will realise that I made very good time.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor today observed the conditions in Tayside, North, a constituency that does not enjoy the benefits of regional aid and does not encourage employers with Government perks. Firms come to my constituency because economic conditions are good and because they believe that there will be customers for their products. Recently, the textile industry has suffered substantially, and I am sure that the Opposition agree that it is important that a Member should encourage firms to come to his constituency and it is better still if he is invited to open a factory. This shows that we must consider the many aspects that affect the government of Scotland. We should not debate this issue frivolously. It is much too serious to be treated flippantly.

It is sad that the only form of devolution that the Leader of the Opposition and his party are prepared to support is devolution that embraces proportional representation, as its first priority—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is the leader of the Liberal party."] I am sorry. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale is the leader of one of the Opposition parties, but not the main one. Sometimes he behaves as though he were the leader of the principal Opposition party. Proportional representation leads to coalitions and back-door deals, and I agree with the hon. Member for Paisley, South on this point. This is one of the many reasons why we should not embrace proportional representation for election to the House or to any assembly set up by it. I remind the Opposition and all those who propose devolved government that they must take on board the fact that their proposals, whatever their form, must first enjoy the support of the House of Commons. Without it, they will not become law.

I do not expect that the proposals in the alliance motion will gain the support of the House of Commons, so I presume that this is a form of political kite-flying—an attempt to pre-empt Labour party proposals. It is an attempt to steal from the Labour party some of the political mileage and political copy in national newspapers or on radio and television. I cannot tell whether the alliance will be successful in its attempt. I am certain that one would not expect these proposals to gain the support of the House of Commons as it exists at present, the House of Commons as it was between 1974 and 1979, or, indeed, any other House of Commons.

Once the proposals are properly evaluated, people begin to ask pertinent questions. Devolution in Scotland means different things to different people. People will say, "Yes, I am in favour, but—". It is the "but" that is important. It is like marriage. One says "I am in favour of marriage in general terms, but not in favour of my children marrying just anyone." [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I make no bones about it. It might mean that I am different because I like to think that my offspring would marry in a way that would make them and their mother happy. There is nothing odd about the way I view it. That is the normal way in which parents behave.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point—it would crucify me if a son of mine married a Tory!

Mr. Walker: The hon. Lady has made the very point that I was trying to get across. She says, "I am in favour of devolution, but I shall qualify it. I am not in favour if the devolution involves a Tory." The hon. Lady has made my point splendidly for me. She clearly showed the qualifications that are hedged around all the proposals. Unfortunately for the hon. Lady and other Opposition Members, it is only when we go into the detail of their proposals that we find that many individuals will not put up with their qualifications, disappointments and, some would say, prejudices. I am convinced that the proposal in the motion would have little hope of getting through the House of Commons, whatever its political complexion, because it does not take on board the fact that about 80 per cent. of the electorate of the United Kingdom live in England. That means that about 80 per cent. of all taxpayers live in England. Proposals such as this, which come before the House and are flawed, will have those flaws exposed during debate in the House. That 80 per cent. of the electorate will tell the hon. Members representing them, from whatever party, that they do not expect them to vote for such a proposal.

Every hon. Member knows that there is one notable absentee from the Opposition Benches this evening. The voice that used to be the voice of West Lothian is missing. Why is that voice missing this evening?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Walker: There are many reasons why the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is missing, but certainly one is not that he has changed his mind. Anyone who talks to the hon. Gentleman knows that he is an honest man, who believes genuinely in what he does. I do not agree with much of what he does. However, this House is about debate and open discussion.

Mr. Maxton: While we are on the subject of those who stick to their principles, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could tell us why his right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) is not here.

Mr. Walker: To be totally honest, I have no idea. However, if my right hon. Friend feels strongly about these matters—*[Interruption.]* I hope that having asked me that question the hon. Member will do me the courtesy of listening to what I have to say. If my right hon. Friend feels strongly about these matters—I understand that he may well do so—it is up to him to come here and make his case. That is what this Chamber is for. I do not know why my right hon. Friend is not here. However, I hope that

[Mr. Walker]

the hon. Gentleman will agree that on the occasions when I have not been in agreement with the Government's position on various matters, I have never shirked coming here to put forward my ideas, because that is what democracy is about. Our job is to try to convince our Front Bench if we want things done differently. We can do so in many different ways and we should certainly use this Chamber effectively for that.

Opposition Members must remember that I am not the only person who has doubts about proposals for an assembly. I have never embraced such proposals because I honestly believe that trying to present a workable package to the House is probably the most difficult task facing anyone in favour of an assembly. When one tries to work out the details of how one will set up the assembly, structure it, make it operate and lay down its rules, one realises that one must take on board the views of all hon. Members in the House.

I refer the House to *Hansard* of 13 January 1976, which states:

"There is a cosy delusion that by appearing to bring decision-making nearer home . . . we shall advance democracy and efficiency of Government. That is not true."

It continues:

"Many struggles confront the people of this country and not a single one . . . will be resolved by this kind of constitutional change."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1976; Vol. 903, c. 292-6.]

Those comments were not made by a Conservative Member, but by the leader of the Official Opposition. I would not disagree with anything in those words because the right hon. Gentleman put his finger right on the button.

The motion is all about political opportunism by the Liberal party in an attempt to pre-empt the Labour party's devolution proposals. We all know that the Labour party's political opportunism is their bringing forward of the Scotland Bill. I have been reading that Bill and it struck me as another piece of political opportunism. I draw the attention of the House to clause 11(1), which states:

"If Parliament subsequently determines, the Assembly shall have power to vary the rates of income tax on individuals resident in Scotland and these rates may be different from those set in the rest of the United Kingdom."

All the evidence suggests that a Labour-controlled assembly in Scotland would behave as have Labour-controlled regional and district councils. It would start to spend the taxpayers' money and would borrow taxpayers' money on their behalf. It would have spending plans that would violently distort the position of Scotland as compared with the rest of the United Kingdom, so much so that businesses would be driven away from Scotland. If we truly believe and genuinely care——

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Gentleman read only part of the clause.

Mr. Walker: I read out the clause exactly as it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us get on.

Mr. Walker: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that I am entitled to take from a clause of a Bill that is before the House my reading of the way in which it is likely to be interpreted when it becomes legislation. The object is then to table amendments to try to change my interpretation of it. Opposition Members know full well that that is the way in which this place operates. They know also that part of presenting any Bill is that one always attempts to dress it up in the best possible way. If you read the rest of that clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you will not find that my assessment of it was wrong.

I turn now to the situation affecting the hon. Member for Moray who I imagine will be able to catch your eye fairly soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and who is not looking very happy. I must advise the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends that at least the position of the Scottish National party is clear. It is credible for that party to say, "If we can get the support of enough of the Scottish people we can go for independence. After all, it is all right for other parts of the world, so why not for Scotland?" That is a credible political position. Although I am totally opposed to it, that does not make me doubt the integrity of those putting forward that proposal. However, I do doubt the integrity of those who put forward fundamental reforms that would affect the long-term stability of our country without carefully thinking through the possible results.

Reference was made earlier to my friend, Mr. Michael Ancram, who used to be an hon. Member of this House. As I understand it, the comment was made that he had suggested that there was a danger and a risk of the position in Scotland developing i..to a Northern Ireland situation. One should not jest about that because the matter is too serious for jesting. Hon. Members should not think that we can simply paper over the cracks on matters that affect people. If Opposition Members consistently bring forward proposals that they cannot deliver and if they build up expectations that they know cannot be realised, there is always a danger. Frivolous comments have been made about the previous direct action taken by the Scottish National party. Indeed, there was levity and it was funny. However, there is nothing funny about suggesting that somehow the way to bring about change is outside this building. I, too, draw attention to that danger. I do not wish to shelter behind what Mr. Ancram said. Those who constantly bring forward proposals that they cannot deliver are responsible for the unrest generated as a result. I make no bones about that. Responsibility for the consequences must lie with those who cannot deliver what they have proposed.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Like the poll tax.

Mr. Walker: The only way to deliver is to achieve a majority in this and the other place. That is the only way to bring about changes in the government of this country. Flawed proposals, which are not carefully thought through——

Mr. Home Robertson: Like the poll tax.

Mr. Walker: —will not get through the House. I have not heard of any poll tax. There is a community charge, which went through this place and became law. If the Opposition wish to deliver their proposals, they must first persuade a majority in the House, not necessarily from their own parties, to vote for them. Otherwise, they are putting forward proposals which could, and may, cause problems elsewhere.

7.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) said that he hoped that the issue of Scottish constitutional change would not stand still but

would remain the subject of dynamic debate. To judge from several Conservative speeches today, the Conservative party is not so much standing still as going backwards and digging itself into ever deeper trenches of unionism. The Conservatives have not even welcomed the opportunity to debate these matters. They have merely brought out all the hoary old chestnuts from the 1970s debates.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) made one of the most illogical speeches I have ever heard. Following the Conservative election defeat, when the Conservatives lost the equivalent of an entire football team north of the border, some brave souls in that party were daring enough to suggest that the Conservative party in Scotland should review its attitude to the constitutional issue. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, however, described his colleagues on that occasion as "twits", "traitors" and "bloody Scots." Some of us might regard those as fitting epithets for the hon. and learned Gentleman himself in the next edition of "Who's Who." That kind of negative response does not serve the interests of the people of Scotland or of sensible, level-headed debate about the demand for progress towards constitutional change.

I welcome the motion as an opportunity to debate this issue. I hope that it will not be the last such opportunity and that others in the House will ensure that the issue is raised time and again. My colleagues and I will support the Liberal motion as we share the Liberal party's commitment to proportional representation, and it has long been our policy to support the concept of single-tier local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: Surely the question of single-tier local authorities should be decided by the Scottish assembly, when it has been elected and set up, rather than for this House to decide on the basis of the kind of majority to which the hon. Lady has always objected.

Mrs. Ewing: We should not have to wait for the establishment of a Scottish assembly to examine the issue of local government. The Scottish National party is committed to the idea of a Scottish constitutional convention to allow all interested bodies, including politicians of all parties, to come to grips with the need to find an across-the-board solution acceptable to the people of Scotland.

Although there may be differences between my party and the Liberal party, we regard the principle enshrined in the motion as a sign that the House is at least aware of the demands in Scotland for constitutional change. We shall therefore support that basic principle. It is depressing that Labour Members cannot override their own views about proportional representation and support the motion.

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Lady has shown commendable charity towards the Liberal party. Will she show equal charity towards the Labour party and vote for our Bill when it comes before the House?

Mrs. Ewing: I am a very charitable lady. The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard the radio programme yesterday in which I participated with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and made it clear that the consensus in the Scottish National party was moving towards supporting that Bill when it comes before the House, because, like today's motion, it provides an opportunity to discuss the issue and to show our commitment to restoring some form of democracy to the people of Scotland.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The SNP's sister party, Plaid Cymru, will be supporting the Liberal motion today and the Bill proposed by Scottish Labour Members when it comes before the House. We look forward to the day when Welsh Labour Members produce a similar Bill for Wales.

Mrs. Ewing: That helpful intervention shows the good sense of our colleagues in Plaid Cymru.

In moving the Government amendment, the Secretary of State reeled off a list of issues in the general election campaign and suggested that the main issues were unemployment, education, and so on. He used that argument to support his claim that there was no demand for devolution in Scotland. I suggest that any member of the Scottish National party, Plaid Cymru, the Liberal party or the Labour party, if asked what were the major issues in the election, would have said that they were unemployment, education, housing, health, and so on. It is extremely naughty of the Secretary of State to try to justify his argument in that roundabout way, and it is unworthy of the intelligence that we know him to possess. He certainly did not go on to suggest how we might deal with all those problems. Many of us believe that issues of that kind cannot be tackled without constitutional change, which we regard as a catalyst which will unleash new approaches, new dynamism and new philosophies instead of the stale, stagnating, centralising philosophies that we now have in Great Britain.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her confirmation that the issues in the general election were unemployment and the other matters to which she referred. Her political philosophy is that an independent Scotland could solve the problems of unemployment more effectively than the present constitutional arrangements, but presumably she does not believe that an assembly with the powers proposed by the Labour party, dealing primarily with education, housing, and so on, would have the slightest effect on unemployment in a manner beneficial to the people of Scotland.

Mrs. Ewing: An assembly with the proper resources could take steps in that direction. It is a matter of political priorities, and the men and women in the Scottish assembly would decide how best to spend the money to achieve the most effective help rather than being tacked on to the coat tails of United Kingdom legislation and not allowed to take such decisions for ourselves.

I would point out to some of the Conservative Members who have left the Chamber and to some of the hon. Members from England, including the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) who showed an interest in the issue of decentralisation, that we want to establish a Scottish assembly and a Scottish Parliament because we believe that that catalyst to change will benefit the English regions and Wales. Only through the Scottish people setting an example and having the confidence to take the lead will this institution at Westminster begin to respond to the genuine demands of people within England and Wales. We must start where there is demand, and there is demand in Scotland.

[Mrs. Ewing]

Another point that has been raised in the debate is the interminable West Lothian question. We keep trying to change its name because we have changed constituencies, but the issue is the same. My hon. Friends and I have never had any difficulty in dealing with this issue, because, quite simply, while we are in this place, we have taken a self-denying ordinance not to vote on any legislation that deals particularly with England. Hon. Members can search *Hansard* and they will find that to be the case.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Lady can only make that point because she is a member of a minority party. If she were in government with a minority in England she could not take a self-denying ordinance and govern. That would be impossible.

Mrs. Ewing: It is not for me to dictate policy to the Labour party and the Conservative party, but I have clearly shown how we deal with that problem. If there were an independent Scottish Parliament, there would be no Scottish Members in the House of Commons.

The amendment in the name of my party clearly states what the SNP believes. Some 20 years ago, my mother-in-law, Winnie Ewing, took her seat in the House as the victor of the Hamilton by-election. We fought that by-election with the slogan, "Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on." That philosophy still underpins the policies and the actions of the SNP. Right hon. and hon. Members like to disparage us by talking about separatism and isolationism, yet the people of Scotland have been denied the right to have their voice heard in the world international community. That is where we seek to take our nation. During the past 20 years we have kept a continuous presence on these Benches. In the 1970s we dominated this House when we brought the constitutional issue right to the Floor of the House and came close to achieving our objectives.

I remind hon. Members of the 1979 referendum in which the people of Scotland said yes, but we had the infamous 40 per cent. rule. That rule had never been used before in regard to the formation of Governments in this place. When we voted to enter the Common Market, which was surely a major constitutional change, there was no 40 per cent. requirement. That led us to talk about the fact that Britannia no longer rules the waves, but waives the rules. If the House had accepted the democratic aspirations of the people of Scotland, we would not be in our present position.

There is still a strong demand in Scotland for a change in the constitution. The MORI opinion poll of this year showed that 33 per cent.—a third of Scots—wanted a completely independent Scottish assembly, and 52 per cent. wanted a Scottish assembly which would be part of Britain but would have substantial powers. Most significantly, support for the status quo had dropped from 38 per cent. in March 1979, the time of the referendum, to 15 per cent. Only 15 per cent. of Scots wish to maintain the status quo. That is an even smaller number than those who voted Conservative at the last election and shows that many Conservatives wish to see a change in the status quo. I suggest that the Conservative party ignores such a demand at its own peril.

Britain is now part of the European Community, and it is interesting to consider the concept of Scotland within it. The EEC, in Brussels and Strasbourg, is now taking many decisions that affect agriculture, fishing, steel, shipbuilding and a variety of vital policy matters. Scotland must have independent government so that she can be represented within the Commission and the Council of Ministers. It is significant that that view is shared by a substantial number of Scots. A Scottish attitude survey, carried out by Survey Research Associates last autumn, revealed that no less than 77 per cent. of Scottish voters agreed with the proposition that Scotland should be independently represented within the EEC, with only 14 per cent. disagreeing. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority—90 per cent.—of SNP voters agreed with the proposition. However, a decisive number of Labour voters —79 per cent.—also agreed, as did 76 per cent. of alliance voters. Even 61 per cent. of Conservative voters agreed.

We are asking the House not just to consider whether to allow Scotland to have an assembly—a talking shop or something that would not be as effective as we would wish — but to look beyond that to the international community and the role that Scotland, as one of the most ancient nations in Europe, could play in it. I do not believe that the Scottish voice is represented effectively on many of the international issues of the day. We need think only of the appalling position in South Africa. Not many Scots agree with the Prime Minister's attitude towards apartheid. Many of them would have wished to have spoken out and to have supported boycotts had they been able to participate in the international debate. Why should the Scottish voice be denied on a whole variety of international issues such as peace, eradication of famine, and so on? There are 142 nations in the United Nations, but Scotland is not among them. We are taking a logical stance. We wish to go into the world community and take upon ourselves the responsibilities of being a nation.

I wish to end my speech with a quotation from a previous Member of Parliament:

> "With the passage of a Home Rule bill in a few months time we could go to Euston, St. Pancras or King's Cross and book a single ticket for Glasgow! For with a nation of five million people, of a manageable size, which has attained a general standard of intelligence and a nation which, above all, has the democratic spirit . . . With a Scottish Parliament, in which our best Scottish brains and courage are expended, we should do in five years, in Scotland, what could not be produced by 25 or 30 years of heart-breaking work in the British House of Commons."

It is an especially interesting quotation because it came from Jimmy Maxton — and an hon. Member with a similar name opened the debate for the Labour party today. Mr. Jimmy Maxton said that after *Punch* had published a cartoon wishing that the rebellious Scots would leave Westminster in peace.

Those hon. Members who come to the House to vote tonight should understand that we are not so much wishing to be rebellious as to be responsible individuals within our own country. I ask the House to support the motion.

7.49 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): It was once said that if ever the meek were to inherit the earth there would be precious little in it for the Scots. During the debate, and especially during the speech of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), some of that not unendearing characteristic has been very evident. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Opposition muttering that I represent Ipswich — I

suspect that that is because Ipswich is in England, not Scotland. They are probably saying, "This is the first Member for an English constituency to intervene" — *[Interruption.]* There have, of course, been one or two interventions by English Members but this is a speech.

It is absurd to think that we can debate the government of Scotland without considering the English dimension. It is, therefore, important that a Member representing an English constituency puts an English point of view.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is taking part in the debate. He sets a good example that should be followed by some of his colleagues, who will no doubt turn up at 10 o'clock to vote against the motion without having listened to the debate. However, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has listened carefully, because it has been quite clear that Scottish Members have recognised the English dimension. Indeed, I stressed that point in my speech. We have no wish to do down the English community; we wish only to take our nation into freedom.

Mr. Irvine: That is all very well, but may I give another reason for my intervening — [HON. MEMBERS: "It is a speech."] Indeed. Although I was born in London and represent an English constituency, my father was born and bred in Scotland. I come from a Free Church of Scotland family. My father's mother was a MacKay and her mother was a Fraser—and one cannot get much more Scottish than that. Although born in London, several of my early years were spent in Edinburgh, and my first memories are of Edinburgh. I still have family in that city and I visit it frequently. Indeed, I have probably climbed more Scottish hills than every Opposition Member put together——

Mr. Kirkwood: What a vicious attack.

Mr. Irvine: Yes, but I wanted to establish my bona fides.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) accused the English of foisting Conservative housing, education and industrial policies on Scotland. He must recognise that on many occasions this century Scotland could be said to have foisted Labour or, indeed, Liberal policies upon England. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State well made the point that there have been only two occasions this century when Labour had a clear majority in England—in 1945 and, but only just, in 1966.

To be fair to the Liberals—after all, it is their motion and I do not want to overlook their role in the debate—there was also a Liberal majority in England in 1906. However, other than on those occasions, when there have been non-Conservative Governments it has been—to use the words of the hon. Member for Cathcart—the Scots and the Welsh who have foisted policies on the English. That is fair enough, because it is part of our system. The Celtic fringe has brought many benefits to England and, with my ancestry, I would not deny that. However, to change that system and impose the West Lothian conundrum would mean Scottish Members retaining their right to debate and vote on the whole range of English domestic issues, while Scottish domestic issues would be decided in Edinburgh with no English intervention.

Mr. Maxton: The logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument is that the Secretary of State and all Conservative Members propose to abolish the Scottish Office and bring all the functions carried out by the Scottish Office into the various Departments at a United Kingdom level. There are United Kingdom Departments and there is a Scottish Office, but there is no English Department of State. If the hon. Gentleman can name one Department of State that is entirely English, I shall give him a fiver.

Mr. Irvine: I shall not take the hon. Gentleman up on that, though I could do with his fiver. Perhaps he will listen to me rather than gesticulate triumphantly to those sitting behind him. The fact that Scotland and Wales both have a Secretary of State is a tribute to and note of their proud position as nations within the United Kingdom. Labour Members are wrong if they think that English people and English industrialists will put up with a situation in which Scotland imposes on England a Labour Government because of its tendency, at least in recent years, to vote Labour, yet at the same time English Members are barred from debating and voting on Scottish domestic issues. The English people and English industrialists simply will not put up with that.

The Labour party is not a naturally devolutionist party. It stumbled upon devolution in the first place because of sheer naked fear. Labour Members were terrified by the rise of the Scottish National party. They clutched at devolution in an attempt to head that off and win back votes which they feared were going to the SNP. When they had clutched at devolution and got their hands on it, they suddenly discovered that, quite apart from it being expedient, it presented a chance for opportunism because they were doing rather better in Scotland than in England. It occurred to them that by adopting this kind of devolution they could seize power in Scotland. I am sure that that is what they hoped. They hoped that the Red Clyde would impose its will on the rest of Scotland and they would have their own Socialist state within Scotland. The Labour conversion to devolution is, therefore, fundamentally flawed. It is built on self-interest, expediency and opportunism.

It is here that my Scottish blood and ancestry come in, and I hope that this will produce a favourable response from Labour Members. The English show a degree of insensitivity towards Scotland and Scottish problems and a tendency to ignore the Scottish dimension. I sympathise with that feeling among Scots. I share it myself. I would like to see Parliament sitting for a fortnight or so in Edinburgh, and perhaps even in Cardiff. That would be a good idea. The occasional meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh have not been a success, but, after all, 350 years ago, our predecessors at Westminster sat in Oxford from time to time. There is much to be said for a full-scale meeting of the Westminster Parliament in Edinburgh or Cardiff.

I fear that if there is a Scottish assembly it will become narrow-minded and inward-looking. It will be obsessed with parochial issues. What is more, it will tend to be dominated by the Left. That will mean disaster for Scotland. The brain drain from Scotland and the loss of population from Scotland to Canada, New Zealand and England in past years would be intensified if there were to be a Socialist Government in Edinburgh. I agree with the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) that, inevitably, a Scottish assembly would need to have tax-raising powers. Otherwise, it would be able to spend without the responsibility of raising the revenue to do so.

[Mr. Irvine]

To allow devolution would diminish not just the United Kingdom; it would diminish England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Ultimately, it would diminish Scotland too.

8 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Like many of my colleagues and many Conservative Members, I welcome the opportunity to debate Scotland. As a devolutionist, I welcome any debate in the House on the question of devolution. However, I cannot agree with the sentiments of the motion, especially proportional representation and the idea of single-tier local authorities. That is not because they are not my ideas, but because I am speaking as a member of the Labour party. We have not taken a decision to embrace proportional representation and we have not taken steps to embrace the need for single-tier local authorities. However, I happen to favour the system of single-tier local authorities, particularly for cities.

I welcome this opportunity for a debate and there will be a further opportunity to discuss devolution when the Labour party presents its Bill for Second Reading. It has to be said that if it were not for the Opposition parties, there would be no discussion on devolution. Although some Conservative Members are saying that they welcome the debate there are no moves by the Government to provide a debate in the House.

I notice the absence of Conservative Members at this time. As someone who has taken part in debates, certainly in Committee—I am sure that the Secretary of State will be informed of what I am about to say or he can read *Hansard*—I am sad at the demise of something I used to enjoy very much. It used to be a treat to hear the oral swordplay that went on between the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden, (Mr. Dewar). I confess that they are both university-trained advocates and one would expect a high level of debate from them. When the Secretary of State appeared at the Dispatch Box as a Minister in his earlier days he had some zest and passion for what he was saying. That is obviously absent when he speaks now. The reason is that, as the Secretary of State for Scotland, he is not looking after the interests of Scottish people as he should be but is merely paying lip service to the Scots because he is taking the undemocratic and centralist view of the Cabinet and employing Thatcherism in Scotland in a way that it has never been applied before.

I have to say to the Secretary of State and Conservative Members, whether they are in the Chamber or not, that they cannot go on treating the people of Scotland with such crass neglect and arrogance. It is absolute nonsense to say that in Scotland there is no need for devolution and that there is no desire for it. In recent months and years the polls have shown a high demand among Scots for some form of devolution, but that has been ignored by Conservative Members. I know how much there is a need and a desire for devolution because I have taken the trouble to travel throughout Scotland to ask people what their views are.

It is worth mentioning that the Labour party in Scotland produced a Green Paper on devolution. We are the only party to have done that. That document was distributed widely across Scotland and we asked for people's views. I was pleasantly surprised by the response to that document. We received 50 positive responses to our request for information on devolution and how people saw our ideas. Not content to sit within the walls of Parliament pontificating about the wishes of the people of Scotland, we sent forth groups to travel the length and breadth of Scotland, from the Orkneys and the Shetlands down to the Borders and from the east coast to the west coast. We travelled in groups to discuss devolution with anyone who cared to talk to us. We discussed what our Green Paper meant to those people and we extracted from them ideas on how they saw devolution being acted upon in Scotland. Any band of people prepared to cross the Pentland Firth in a boat to talk to people in the Shetlands about devolution have shown that they are interested in the views of the people.

In the main we talked to local authorities, but we also talked to various interested groups. In the local authorities we met Conservatives, Liberals, members of the Scottish National party and, of course, Labour members. There were different strands of approach in all the discussions, but one of the key questions we were asked was what was going to happen to the second tier of local authorities. We developed a theme and said that that would be left for the elected assembly to determine. We said that it was not for us as a consultative body to express our ideas. When the assembly is about to be elected, it is right and proper that the various parties standing for election should declare their views. It will be up to the people to read the manifestos of those standing and they can then cast their vote for the party that they consider to be the most suitable and closest to their ideals.

We collected that material over a period of years and we worked upon it in many committees. The gallant sailors were led by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and when he was unable to travel because of other duties we were led by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) or my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). We continued to process the material and eventually drew it together to bring about our Bill for devolution. Of course, we shall have an opportunity to debate the contents of that Bill in the near future.

Having gone to all that bother, trouble and work, it is a scandalous insult for Conservative Members to declare that they have better knowledge about what the people of Scotland want. Irrespective of what our manifestos were when we went to the people of Scotland, it is an insult to their intelligence to suggest that they did not know what was contained in our manifestos. By the sheer weight of their numbers, the people of Scotland voted for the Labour party's policies, one of the strongest planks of which was devolution. A devolved assembly would take care of some of the difficulties that the people of Scotland now face or are about to face. In the first instance, there would be no poll tax. No poll tax would ever go through an elected assembly in Scotland. Now that the issue is beginning to be talked about, we have ascertained that Scottish people would dismiss a poll tax.

As for an English education system being foisted upon the Scots, that would not have been allowed or tolerated under a directly elected Scottish assembly, whatever its political make-up. I am sure that the Scottish education system, which is admired by the countries of Europe, would not have been allowed to be systematically

destroyed, as it will be, judging by the various attitudes that have been displayed by Conservative Members and the intended legislation.

We took our ideas about devolution to the people of Scotland, and they have given the country their answer. I do not recall any Scottish vote to foist the Scottish education system on England. I do not recall any legislation such as that relating to the poll tax being foisted upon the people of England by a majority vote in Scotland. It is absolute nonsense to say that that is the case. If we could obtain a directly elected Scottish assembly I would gladly give up the right to vote on English constituency matters. Proportional representation is not relevant to the needs of the people of Scotland.

I should accept it if the Government were to say, "We shall give you your Bill, provided proportional representation is to be the method by which an assembly is elected." There is no difficulty in our saying that that is the case.

First and foremost, we in Scotland need a directly elected assembly to protect us from the very person whose job it is to protect us, the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Secretary of State—certainly his predecessor—has seized immense powers. Local democratic decision-making has almost become a farce. The reduction of the rate support grant in all its forms has meant not more accountability but a great deal less accountability for local authorities. That is one of the reasons the people of Scotland will not have the will of central Government thrust upon them.

As democrats, we wish to protect the rights of democratically elected local authorities. They should not be overruled by a non-democratic central Government. The people of Scotland have made their choice. I do not believe that 80 per cent. of Scottish people are devolutionists. There is strong feeling among Scots for devolution, but most of it is anti-Thatcherism.

Recently, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that what we in Scotland need is not less Thatcherism but more Thatcherism. Scottish people need less gruel. More gruel will stick in the throats of the people of Scotland. They will not tolerate such arrogance from a London Government. They will continue to make their protests known in whatever democratic manner they can against the pressure that is being almost exuded in London—it is like the power of Svengali—by those who purport to represent the Scots. In particular, I refer to the Conservatives in Scotland. They will be completely eliminated at the next general election. I hope that that will spread south of the border so that we may eliminate a Government who are hell-bent on blindly pursuing their policies, irrespective of the true wishes of the people of Scotland.

8.15 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): The lack of Conservative Members on the Government Benches is an eloquent statement about their interest in Scottish affairs. Indeed, no Back-Bench Scottish Members are here to listen. It is incumbent upon them to listen to hon. Members' points about the future of government in Scotland. I appreciate the brief appearance that was made by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine). He reflected on a new dimension of devolution. Depopulation and the brain drain are to be the next manifestations of the Government's anti-devolutionary strategy in Scotland. Obviously, he does not have much stomach for anything that may be relevant to the debate.

I am pleased to contribute to the debate. I shall not support the motion. It confuses many important issues. Like my hon. Friends who have spoken, I support some of what is in the motion. Clearly, the reference to single-tier local government and proportional representation are not presently on the Labour party's agenda in Scotland. If a motion seeks to devolve government from Westminster, it is not sensible to talk about single tiers of local government without a Scottish assembly being charged with that responsibility.

A much more sensible approach has been outlined in the Scottish legislation that was before the House last week. I hope that it will soon be given a Second Reading. It reflects the Labour party's wisdom in pursuing a sensible, constructive way forward. It will reflect the legitimate aspirations of the people of Scotland, who have been treated with utter contempt by Conservative Members. It will allow us to democratise the existing administrative devolution in Scotland that has been developed over many years. It will provide a focus for the regeneration of the Scottish soul.

I make no extravagant demands that unemployment will be solved overnight or that there will be massive investment in new industry. It will allow us to reflect on some of the areas in which the Government are creating most mayhem; that is to say, education, social services and the National Health Service. They are the most important aspects of the Scottish legislation. I sound a careful warning to Liberal party Members and their collegues in the Social Democratic party. They presently run a terrible risk.

The motion is confusing because it raises minor obstacles rather than the achieving of some form of self-government or devolution. If the Liberal party continues to push for PR and for a single tier of local government before there is an assembly in Scotland to deal with those matters, that will not be in its best interests, the interests of the SDP or the interests of the Scottish people. My constructive advice to the Liberal party is that we now have on the Scottish political map two parties with extreme policies. On the one hand, we have the Scottish Nationalist party, which is committed to separation.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): It is the Scottish National party.

Mr. McLeish: The Scottish National party — I apologise to the hon. Member—is involved in narrow nationalism. It seeks to talk about separation and to isolate Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom. That extreme position is not supported by the Scottish people, as was shown in the recent general election results. What is increasingly of concern to us is that that policy is anti-English. We may joust with Conservative Members about their participation in Scottish affairs, but it is dangerous for any political party to seek to lay at the door of the English people and English Conservative Members the damage that has been inflicted upon Scotland by the Conservative Government. The two are not synonymous, and it is important that all political parties look at that carefully.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not know what the policies of the SNP are. Far from being

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

anti-English, many of our members are English. It is just that if they live and work in Scotland, they put Scotland first. Nor are we a separatist party. The hon. Gentleman advocates separatism — separating Scotland from its wealth and its position in Europe and in the world. We want to get Scotland back into the world, not take it out of the world, as the hon. Gentleman does.

Mr. McLeish: It is arrant nonsense to suggest that the Labour party supports separatism. We wish to see a devolved framework of government. The hon. Gentleman talked about separating Scotland from its wealth, but it is the Labour party that has spoken about investment, unemployment and jobs in Scotland. It seems that the party that likes to say no—the SNP—is not concerned with anything other than attacking Labour Members. I regret and resent that as not being in the interests of the Scottish people.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): That is why we are here.

Mr. McLeish: My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

The SNP has an extreme policy, but the Conservatives have another—a massive disinterest in anything that is Scottish or anything that is of relevance to the Scottish people. The whole debate about government in Scotland must be coloured by the Government's contempt and arrogance for Scottish affairs and Scottish policies.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the Secretary of State for Scotland, will not have had time to reflect on the recent lunch time missionary attempt by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he suggested that the Scots are always moaning and are still hooked on the dependency culture. He thinks that we should be unhooked and that we should be involved in the enterprise culture. Clearly that continues a saga of missionaries, as the noble Lord Young of Groffham and the Secretary of State for Scotland have recently visited Scotland. The people of Scotland are sick and tired of lectures from Ministers who do not understand Scottish culture and, more importantly, care a great deal less about it. They talk about dependency. Since the Tories were elected, another 230,000 Scots have become dependent on dole money and nearly 800,000 Scots are dependent on social security. We want Scots to be unhooked from dependency. It is sheer hypocrisy for the Government to advocate the enterprise culture when they have been the biggest culprits this century in putting more and more people on the dependency route.

That underlines the poverty of the Government's view on Scottish affairs, and obviously Labour Members could make political capital out of that. However, how much more supportive and constructive it would be if, when the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland replies this evening, he says that the Government are interested in Scotland and that they will consider devolution. Would that not be in the interests of the Scottish people and would that not show that all the parties are committed to those issues? I fear that he will not say that, but the Labour party is always optimistic and lives in hope.

The debate has highlighted the policies of the Opposition parties. The Labour party stands for a reasonable—in some respects radical—way forward for the Scottish people. For Conservative Members to argue that there is no popular mandate for devolution is arrant nonsense. The Government were reduced to a rump in the general election. Recent opinion polls show a goundswell of opinon in favour of some form of devolved government. The precise nature of it is not specified, but there is clearly a gut feeling that something has to be done to allow the Scots, within the United Kingdom framework, to debate matters that are esentially Scottish.

The debate should be about not whether we need or do not need a Scottish assembly, but, when we have a Scottish assembly, how that will impact on people in Scotland. It is important for all hon. Members to make that important connection in the minds of Scottish people between the assembly and the issues that affect their everyday lives. For example, housing reforms that are quite alien to many people and education reforms that have no particular focus on Scottish culture have been thrust upon us. That highlights the preserve of the Government to steal from London and to hijack the debate in Scotland. It is the same with National Health Service policies. Conservative Members always misconstrue the effects of the Scotland Bill. It will not overnight produce miracles, but in a democracy it will return what are essentially Scottish affairs to be dealt with in Scotland. Is that too much to ask of the mother of Parliaments? Labour Members do not think that it is.

We want to see devolved government in Scotland. We believe that it will be a small step forward, and we make no lavish claims about the impact that it will have. I make a plea for sensible, sane debate in Scotland. I also plead with the Tories to realise that they are governing Scotland and for them to show to the Scottish people that the contempt, arrogance and indifference to which they have been exposed over the past eight years will soon come to an end, and that all political parties can talk about democracy and devolution.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I raised earlier with Mr. Speaker the matter of the selection of amendments to the Liberal party's motion, and was told that the amendment that had been selected was that which appears on the Order Paper in the name of the Government. Against that background, is it not surprising that there are so few Conservative Members in the Chamber? Indeed, there are no Conservative Back Benchers present to support the Government's amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not the Chair's responsibility whether Members are present or absent. Perhaps it would help the House if I were to repeat what Mr. Speaker said at the beginning of the debate, when he explained that he had selected the amendment that stands in the names of the Prime Minister and others.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): It has been a long-held ambition of mine to try to explain to those who either cannot understand or will not listen why it is vital to give Scotland legislative control over its own affairs. Unfortunately, there are no Conservative Back Benchers present to hear what I have to say.

Mr. Fairbairn: Come off it.

Mrs. Michie: At any rate, there is no Conservative Back Bencher in his place. Well, there was not. I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has decided to take his place.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have been in the Chamber all the time.

Mrs. Michie: We have been told repeatedly, especially by the Secretary of State for Scotland, that there is no evidence to justify the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong to make that assertion. I shall take a few minutes to look at four very clear areas of evidence to support our contention.

First, all public opinion polls have shown, and do show, that the majority of people in Scotland want to have control over their own affairs. The Secretary of State for Scotland could come up with only one public opinion poll that reflected a contrary view, but that poll did not ask the people whether they wanted a Scottish Parliament or whether they wanted devolution. Instead, they were asked whether they were concerned about their jobs. Obviously, anyone would reply yes.

The second piece of evidence was provided by the 1979 referendum on devolution. A clear majority said yes.

Mr. Fairbairn: Rubbish.

Mrs. Michie: There was a clear yes majority. We were bitterly deceived following the never-to-be-forgotten broadcast by Lord Home of the Hirsel, which was followed by the Prime Minister's promise that a no vote did not mean the end of devolution. The Government thought, wrongly, that they could toss out a sop to the Scottish people by arranging for the Scottish Grand Committee to meet in Edinburgh.

Following the referendum, the Government tried to say that the Scottish people were not wholeheartedly in support of devolution because only 32 per cent. had voted yes. It should be remembered that they were not asked to vote on the principle. Instead, they were voting on a Labour party Bill which fell far short of what was acceptable, most particularly and importantly on the issue of a voting system. There was a genuine and legitimate fear that a Scottish assembly would be dominated by the Labour party from the central belt that had been elected on a minority vote. I accept the Western Isles' argument, but I am talking about the 1979 referendum.

The third piece of evidence, and the most telling, was provided by the general election in June, when the number of Conservative Members in Scotland was reduced by over 50 per cent. The Conservative party in Scotland should ask itself why that happened. Of 72 Members in Scotland, 62 support at least devolution and power. The Conservative party in Scotland received only 24 per cent. of the vote. The alliance won seats, while the Conservative party lost them.

The Government must understand that 713,000 people voted Tory in Scotland while 2·25 million voted for other parties. Surely it is impossible to ignore such telling evidence. What more does the Conservative party want? Is it prepared to wait for the next general election, when the last remaining 10 Conservative Members will disappear from the face of Scotland? Is it only then that it will listen and believe?

The fourth piece of evidence comes from within the Conservative party, with the formation of the constitutional reform forum. This is a healthy development and I give it a warm welcome, especially as I understand that the group involved favours a fair electoral system and the abolition of one tier of local government.

A truly representative Parliament that has authority because it represents the voice of the people must fairly represent different strands of opinion in different regions of the country. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) described proportional representation as a minor matter. That is not so to the people of Scotland. In Scotland, all parties are minorities. No one party commands a majority of the Scottish vote.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) said that it was an obstacle, it is an important principle in a devolution Bill? It ill-becomes Labour Members that their party, the party of Keir Hardie, which during his time supported proportional representation, should now spurn the concept when there is the opportunity to arrive at a consensus in favour of devolution. I say that as the person who was the Welsh Liberal devolution spokesman during the Welsh referendum campaign.

Mrs. Michie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that intervention.

A Parliament that represented political parties in proportion to their votes and gave equal value to every vote could be the foundation of a new sort of politics in Scotland.

The Labour party is a democratic organisation that has large support in one part of Scotland, but it should not ignore the facts. Labour gained only 42 per cent. of the vote at the general election, and that gave it 50 of the 72 Scottish seats. However, 58 per cent. of Scottish electors did not vote for it. In Glasgow the Labour party holds all 11 seats, but there are still some Tories in the city. Would the Labour party deny them representation? In the Grampian region the Labour party holds only two seats, and in the Highland and Border regions it has none. It holds none in Dumfries and Galloway either. I hope that the Labour party will reflect on why it refused to guarantee fair representation to the whole of Scotland.

It is the view of the Liberal party that it would be a gross betrayal of the people if they were delivered into the hands of a minority party. I am glad that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said at the Dispatch Box — I believe I heard him rightly — that if the Government brought forward a Bill that contained proportional representation he would be prepared to consider it.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way, and I am sure that the House generally is grateful to her as well for unseating a leading ex-Liberal. He is now doing as damaging a job for the Conservative party as he once did for the Liberal party.

First, does the hon. Lady appreciate that if her party's policy, as explained this evening—as I understand it, it is to reduce the number of Scottish Westminster Members —is pursued, the areas in which there will be reductions will be in the Highland and Border regions, where there is no Labour representation? The hon. Lady is making a fair speech, and it would be better if her hon. Friends

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

allowed her to make it in her own way. Secondly, she said that her party is committed to one tier of local government. Does she consider it fair for the House to set up an assembly and instruct it on what it should do about local government or any other matter?

Mrs. Michie: I disagree that there would be less representation from the Highland and Island areas of Scotland, and I would ensure that that did not happen. I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's point about single-tier local authorities later. The establishment of a Scottish Parliament means just that, and the name is of significance. English regions should have assemblies, but the same cannot apply to Scotland, for the obvious reason that it is a nation and not a region. We find it tiresome, nay repugnant, to be constantly compared with a region of England.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Michie: No, I should like to finish this point.

It was Scotland the nation that went into so-called Union with England the nation, not with a region of it.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Michie: I should like to finish this point.

The late John MacIntosh, whom I and many others admired, deliberately avoided the word assembly, for he too saw it as meaning a large local authority not suitable for the transfer of legislative power from central Government to a country with its own legal system.

The Scottish claim for the restoration of its own Parliament is indisputable. It was a dark day in our history —28 April 1707—when the Scottish Parliament met for the last time and Chancellor Seafield summed it up with the melancholy words:

"Now there's ane end to ane auld song."

Mr. Fairbairn: With great respect to the hon. Lady, she is getting the date wrong—it was 1 May. I have been trying to have it called Union day for many years, because that is when the Union was created. If the hon. Lady understands the history of Scotland, the kingdom of Fife existed before it was the united kingdom of Scotland, and Perthshire was a separate kingdom from Scotland. Why does she particularly imagine that Scotland as a nation, as she tends to call it, should be some sort of Liberal fantasy, when if we look at history we see that it can be separated differently?

Mrs. Michie: It was on 28 April 1707 that the Scottish Parliament met for the last time. As to the kingdom of Fife, I do not believe that it has a legal or education system of its own. I am talking about the nation of Scotland.

The two Parliaments from the main parts of this island were to unite, but there was a grafting of the Scottish Parliament on to the English one. Today, we know that there must be a recasting of the relationship between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom if the United Kingdom is to survive. The need is, therefore, to provide a focus and forum that can clearly express the political will of the country and allow far greater participation in Government, particularly by the Scottish women. Thousands had eagerly, and with a sense of excitement and enthusiasm, anticipated a Scottish assembly following the referendum, yet their hopes were dashed and cold water was poured on their aspirations. They were dismissed out of hand in a most perfunctory and disdainful manner. The hurt and disappointment are not forgotten.

Not all is lost, and with good will a satisfactory solution can be found. That is why we have offered to the Government an answer that will stand the test of time and strengthen the unity of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) asked about local government. The Government have repeatedly stated that a Scottish Parliament would be an extra tier of government, which is totally untrue. If one believes that, one has been listening to the Labour party. Any realistic Bill must contain a provision for the abolition of one tier of local government. There is no more classic example of that need than my own constituency of Argyll and Bute, which sits uneasily in the huge Strathclyde region. It has within its boundaries almost half the population of Scotland. It was accepted initially, albeit reluctantly, in 1979. That was due in no small way to the mammoth efforts made by the Reverend Geoffrey Shaw, who travelled extensively throughout the mainland and islands of Argyll to reassure the people that they would not be forgotten by a Glasgow-based candidate.

Evidence was submitted by Argyll and Bute council to the Stoddart committee of inquiry on local government in favour of the district becoming an all or most purpose local authority, similar to Western Isles, which was one of the big successes of local government reorganisation. If that had happened, we would not now be battling with the Labour-dominated Strathclyde region to keep our rural schools open. I hope that sense will prevail and that the urban-based councillors will realise that it is one thing to close a primary school in Glasgow, but that to do so in a place such as Argyll would tear the heart out of the small rural communities.

Mr. Wilson: As a native of the county that the hon. Lady represents, I remember the old Argyll county council. It was one of those laird-ridden Highland county councils that paid its workers the minimum and provided them with the minimum facilities. It was those conditions that caused Strathclyde to invest a disproportionate amount of its resources in upgrading facilities, wages and conditions. Does the hon. Lady hark back to the days of Argyll county council, and would she like to see another laird-ridden Argyll and Bute single-tier authority instead of what presently exists?

Mrs. Michie: I remember that the hon. Gentleman was strongly opposed to devolution when it was first suggested. I am not harking back to Argyll county council. I want to move forward with an all-purpose Argyll and Bute district, in conjunction with a Scottish Parliament.

I would remind the Secretary of State, if he were present, that there is an old Gaelic saying — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may groan. I shall tell the people of Scotland that they groaned.

"Cha tùit caoran à cliabh falamh."

That means, "A peat will not fall from an empty creel." The Government's creel is empty as far as Scotland is concerned, but the Secretary of State is a sensible person, and he can fill it if he will but listen. Indeed, I hope that the whole Government, including the Prime Minister, will listen, for their adamant refusal to consider a Scottish legislature to look after our affairs flies in the face of all the injunctions and exhortations that we hear from them

to stand on our own feet and take responsibility. The Government say, "You must have freedom to choose." We want that freedom.

Conservative Members should heed this warning. The subject will not go away. Thousands of us will keep faith with those who have gone before, and who have worked over the years for Scottish home rule, simply because it is right. Like the Prime Minister, we shall go on and on. If it does not come in our lifetime, our children will pick up and carry the baton and will pass it on to succeeding generations for however long it takes. If the Government fail to honour the Tory pledges of the 1960s and of 1979, they will hear the cry "Let my people go" gathering volume and becoming ever louder.

8.51 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): It has been worth the waiting. As you probably know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been here for some six hours, but I am not complaining. The wait has allowed me to gather some interesting and anecdotal material with which to fill out my speech.

For the first time in my experience in Parliament, the alliance Bench is full — or, at least, nearly full. Two famous faces are missing: those of the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Perhaps that accounts for the cohesion of the Bench this evening.

I have also been able to listen to some of the speeches. In fact, unlike most of those on the alliance Bench, I have listened to all of them, which has given me a few parliamentary cameos. I listened with determination and tremendous patience to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and, having listened to him — with more patience than interest — I can express only one hope. If I am ever skint and in the dock, I hope to God that he is not on the panel of legal aid lawyers, because he was, perhaps, this evening's worst advocate from the Conservative Benches.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) said that he was the first English Member from the Government Benches to have made a speech. I have news for him. I heard the others, and he was the first Member from the Government Benches to make a speech. All that we heard before that was a collection of homilies, clichés, rumours, ambiguities and scaremongering.

Let me also refer in passing to the intervention from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, who, unfortunately, is not present. The hon. Gentleman has come a long way in the past six months. In June, he was unknown throughout Scotland. Today he is unknown throughout Britain, and his contribution this evening explains why. His hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye made an impassioned plea for a broad front on devolution—which, I am sure, would be widely welcomed by Labour Members, were it not for the fact that, on the most recent occasion when he had the opportunity to exhibit such a broad front — at the festival of democracy — he was the very person to condemn and try to scupper such a development.

I am grateful for the opportunity to listen to those contributions. I am also glad to have heard the Secretary of State's contribution. As far as I can tell, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has found it convenient, at every conceivable stage of this Parliament, either to curtail discussion on Scottish matters or to avoid it. I recall how swiftly he jumped to his feet — along with his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary — to curtail the debate on the Scottish Development Agency; and with what glee he came into the Chamber, only a few days ago, to shout proudly and from a sedentary position that we had lost Scottish Question Time. It was nice to see today that he was prepared to take part in a debate on a Scottish issue.

A few years ago, the Secretary of State would not have been so reluctant to discuss Scottish affairs. A few years ago, he would have used all his undoubted skills of advocacy to explain to Parliament why there was a certain uniqueness about Scotland—why, indeed, there was an undoubted and inevitable case for devolution. Today, he told us that he had not changed his mind since those days. To put it baldly, he could have fooled me, and he could have fooled the people of Scotland. Of course he has changed his mind. It is not so much a U-turn as a great big circle. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman stood at the Dispatch Box today, I recalled an old adage. If a week is a long time in politics, a political promotion must represent a millennium. The sad fact is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been prepared to lay down his principles for his political career. If I may paraphrase Burns, he has been "Bought and sold for Treasury gold. What a parcel of rogues in an administration."

By watching the minutes of his political career, I fear that the Secretary of State runs the grave risk of losing the hours of that same career. However, the question will be asked outside the House: if he can so swiftly, abruptly and completely change his mind on a matter so central to the people of Scotland, how can he be trusted on any other single matter that affects Scotland?

The Secretary of State has been left not only without principles, but almost without friends. I am told that, before the right hon. and learned Gentleman flew down here this week, he found himself at Glasgow airport short of change to make an urgent telephone call. He asked a passer-by to lend him 10p to telephone one of his friends. I am told that the passer-by replied, "Here is 50p, Malcolm. You can telephone all of them."

As recently as this weekend the Secretary of State was not so much stabbed in the back as harpooned in the chest by his recent and erstwhile colleague the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). I do not for one minute doubt the integrity of the right hon. Gentleman but we should reflect on the fact that this sudden, public reiteration by a leading Scottish Tory — if that is not a contradiction in terms — proves conclusively the old adage that the prospect of hanging in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully. But the Tories cannot even get that right. They wait until the executioner, in the form of the Scottish electorate, opens the trapdoor beneath them, which causes some of them to concentrate their minds from the other side of life.

Mr. Foulkes And even then some of them do not.

Dr. Reid: Even then, having been hanged, drawn and quartered by the Scottish electorate, some of them do not.

Recently I heard the Secretary of State urge his Scottish colleagues to greater efforts. He called on them to be "Apostles for Conservatism" — apostles of free enterprise. The danger about the biblical analogy is that there were 12 apostles—a mass base that the Tory party in

[Dr. Reid]

Scotland has been completely unable to replicate. If the Tory party can muster not 12 apostles but only 10, we should remember that among the depleted apostles there may be a few doubting Thomases and that one of them might be prepared to take the 30 pieces of silver. We are also entitled to ask whether there is one among them with sufficient guts to deny their mistress in Downing street once—never mind three times. I do not believe that we shall find such a person among the depleted ranks of the apostles.

In the absence of principles, friends and numbers, the Government have been forced back on their old allies and weapons—misrepresentation and scaremongering. Their strategy is predicted by their capacity consistently and intentionally to misunderstand the Opposition's arguments on devolution. In this case, ignorance is not bliss; it is a political godsend. It allows the Government to construct their own arguments for devolution on a false basis and then to demolish them with the ease with which any fool can demolish a man of straw.

There are those in Scotland who, guided by frustration rather than by political calculation, have trodden the road to separatism, but the numbers are extremely few. For Conservative Members consistently to confuse the argument for devolution with the argument for separatism is totally and intentionally to misconstrue the argument for devolution. To say that the argument for separatism is the norm in Scotland is completely to misrepresent both the Opposition's arguments and the sentiments of the Scottish people. To assert, without so much as a political blush, that there is no demand for devolution in Scotland shows the short-sightedness and the blindness that afflicted the Tory party before the last election and that is obviously still alive and well in the body politic.

I do not intend to deal in detail with the opinion poll that was published tonight. It has been dealt with fully by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and by several of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Let me deal, however, with the opinion poll that was referred to with such confidence in his speech by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Having selectively picked his opinion poll, when he got to the bottom of it he said that only 4 per cent. of the people of Scotland want devolution. He swiftly and quietly moved over the figure that lies just above the 4 per cent. I do not know whether hon. Members heard what that figure is. It shows that only 4 per cent. of the people of Scotland believe that rent and rates are an issue.

If 4 per cent. in that opinion poll was enough to persuade the Secretary of State for Scotland to impose a new rates regime on Scotland—the iniquitous poll tax—it is good enough to introduce devolution, which would benefit the people of Scotland. To portray the case for devolution as a sop to nationalism is to belittle the case as well as to misunderstand the cause.

The Opposition have certainly not argued that devolution should be a substitute for a United Kingdom Government. Devolution has been argued as a necessary complement to United Kingdom Government if there is to be good government in Scotland. It was another of the red herrings brought in by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Indeed, the Secretary of State has brought in more red herrings than a Russian fishing trawler. He raised the question of tax. He said that if there was devolution of power to Scotland the Scottish people would be taxed more. Fair enough. Even if we accept his assumptions, he suggested that there might be a trade-off of higher tax for better services and more say for the individual over the individual's affairs. However, under this Government the average family in Scotland is now paying £27 more in tax. In other words, it is paying a vast increase in tax for worse services and no say in personal affairs. If the Secretary of State's suggestion was put to the Scottish people, their choice would be obvious.

The Secretary of State also raised the West Lothian question. That question has been answered on several occasions by my hon. Friends the Members for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing).

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: Indeed, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) also constantly raises this question. I do not intend to go over the matter again. However, the West Lothian question raises an anomaly. No Opposition Member has ever suggested that it does not raise an anomaly, but life is full of anomalies. I want to raise another "West" question which is a greater anomaly, the Westminster question. How can 10 people who have no social base whatsoever in Scotland, who have been reduced to a rump of their previous glorious selves, govern the nation of Scotland? That is an anomaly even within the framework of the United Kingdom constitution.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Following precisely the hon. Gentleman's argument, why does he not join the Scottish National party?

Dr. Reid: Because I believe that, no matter how frustrated one may be, one cannot wish away 300 years of historical reality. Trying to separate the Scottish and the English economy is like trying to separate the "kernel from the great oak." Those are the words of Jim Sillars. I do not know what has caused him to change his mind, because he was right when he said that in 1986. Despite all the frustrations that I feel, I remain a Socialist who wishes to change the United Kingdom Parliament and its industrial and economic policies towards socialism. That is not incompatible with recognising the diversity of the United Kingdom and attempting to enrich the United Kingdom by bringing in the diversity of the tapestry of nations.

The Opposition case is fourfold and simple and has been repeated time and time again. It is democratic. It is not simply a matter, as was suggested, of occasionally holding Parliament in Edinburgh or in Leeds. It is not a matter, as some Conservative Members have suggested, of a touring mediaeval monarchical circus with courtiers. The problem is that the courtiers are already in Edinburgh and they are making the decisions. Thousands of Scottish civil servants are enacting hundreds of pieces of Scottish legislation. There is even a handful of bright men, far brighter than those who at present are burdened with presiding over the Scottish Office. I am not arguing that geographical proximity is a sufficient condition for democratic control, but it is a necessary condition.

Our case is also decentralist within the framework of the United Kingdom. As right hon. and hon. Members have explained, this is the most centralised nation state of the modern western industrialised nations. Is it not an irony that the monolithic leadership of one of the most monolithic nations, the Soviet Union, is desperately trying

to decentralise, while the political commissar sent from Downing street to Scotland has turned his face completely against any form of decentralisation?

All Opposition Members recognise the economic and social intertwining of the Scottish and English nations. That is why we have argued that the main levers of economic, fiscal and industrial power should stay at the United Kingdom level if devolution of power is the political equivalent of worker participation and consumer input into a good business. All of those arguments apply equally to other regions of England and Wales. They are on the periphery of the south-east golden triangle. Under the free market operated by the Government, they are being economically and socially crucified.

We support any area which wishes to have its own form of devolution. The timing and the form might not be the same, because unless devolution is rooted in historical reality only a false imposition from outside will be possible.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman has only to win majority support in England to obtain what he seeks. When his party had the majority in the House it was unable to deliver. It will be exactly the same next time because English Members will not vote for such proposals.

Dr. Reid: As usual, the hon. Gentleman misunderstands politics. There are developments which bring the north, Wales, Scotland, Manchester and south Yorkshire together. Slowly but surely we are beginning to realise that the uniting factors are far greater than the dividing factors and the golden triangle which revolves round the City of London.

I accept that my argument is nationalist in many ways, but I speak only for myself. I am talking about not the narrow nationalism of the Scottish National party, but a nationalism that recognises the cultural diversity of the Scottish people. That nationalism recognises our characteristics and true history which, over a period, has come to make us believe that we are a nation. There is a feeling of national consciousness. I am not saying that Scotland has ever been a nation state, because obviously it has not.

I do not believe that one can separate Scotland's economy from that of the rest of the United Kingdom, but, despite all the protestations from our opponents, that feeling of national consciousness will not disappear. It is there. It is a daily, living reality in the workplace, the pubs, the shops, the streets and the homes. It is a feeling of being Scottish. If the Secretary of State or anybody else doubts that, I suggest that the next time he pays a visit to Hampden park he comes with me to the terraces instead of languishing in the royal box with his friends. He might then understand the Scottish heritage. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Ibrox?"] To keep everybody happy we should have to mention every football club in Scotland.

If the Secretary of State does not understand what I have tried to say, that explains his lack of understanding of the motion and the Government's negative attitude to it. The real threat to the unity of the United Kingdom stems not from a recognition of that reality but from an obstinate refusal to recognise it and to try to uderstand it.

9.14 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am sorry tht the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) has left the Chamber. It is par for the course for the Liberals in the west of Scotland, when they want to have a go, to throw something in the *Oban and West Highland Times* or some other Strathclyde newspaper. The hon. Lady should remember that many local authority workers are grateful that Strathclyde took over Argyll. I was a full-time officer covering Argyll and I know that the conditions in which people had to work under the old Argyll county council were deplorable. Lorry drivers suffered from frostbite because the management would not give them gloves. That was one of the first cases that I was asked to take up as a union officer. As soon as Strathclyde took over, the cry went up for parity with Glasgow.

The Liberals go on about proportional representation. I put it to them that in other countries in Europe which have proportional representation Fascists are sometimes returned. As secretary of the Italian group, I meet many Italian parliamentarians who say that they deplore the power that the far Right has achieved in Italy as a result of proportional representation. Some members of the extreme Right in this country, who cannot get power through the normal system but who could get it through proportional representation, will seek representation in Parliament by that means.

I recall from my experience in Glasgow that when the SNP had the balance of power council meetings went on until 10 o'clock and sometimes 12 o'clock at night. That is what happens when a very small group has the balance of power. It is the balance of power that the minority groups seek to achieve through proportional representation. People have rejected hung councils and hung Parliaments because they know that such a system gives the minority groups power out of all proportion to what they deserve.

I hope that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will tell us how he would deal with the problem of the constituency link of every Member of Parliament and every councillor if proportional representation were introduced.

I represent Springburn. All hon. Members represent constituencies. They have a feel for their constituencies and they know the local people. They know what is going on. If they do not, they deserve to lose their seats. They have to look after not only the business in this House but the problems of their constituents and their constituencies. I was returned with 69 per cent. of the poll. The smaller parties can get a vote in Springburn just by lodging a nomination paper and nothing else. In the 1983 election, the SDP candidate told me that he took one half shift off work to fight the election, and he turned up at the Glasgow Kelvin hall for the count. That was his sole contribution to the election in Springburn. The Liberals, the Social Democrats and the Owenites tell us that they are entitled to proportional representation and that the electorate should vote for them on the basis of that half shift dedicated at Springburn.

Members of a panel of people such as Bill Rodgers and the former right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead, who was beaten, would be picked to come to Parliament or to a Scottish assembly. I hope that, when the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire tells us what a great system proportional representation is, he will highlight the problems that it can throw up. It can often lead to no decisions being taken. I believe that, when the Scottish people get the assembly, they will have a first-past-the-post

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

winner-take-all, system. If the members of that body do not win the people's confidence, they deserve not to be returned at the next election. That is a better system than the alternative promoted by the ragtag and bobtail alliance parties.

9.19 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I shall not follow the argument deployed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). There will be occasions, to which I look forward, to debate the rights and wrongs of proportional representation at greater length. There are flaws in the systems in some other countries. If parties set their face against inter-party co-operation under a system of proportional representation they deserve the results that they inevitably get. Evidence in other mature democracies, and certainly in many competitor countries in Europe, illustrates beyond doubt that the system can work well and produce a much more modern and efficient method of government than our present one.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkwood: I know that the hon. Gentleman shares my wish that the Under-Secretary of State should have the maximum time to deploy the Government's argument.

I hope that the House feels that it has had value for money tonight. We have heard our fair share of the usual rhetoric and ribaldry, a fair dash of pedantry and the usual agony and ecstacy from the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). We have also been treated to a dose of sophistry from the Secretary of State for Scotland. He says he has not shifted his position, but is waiting for the sanction of at least 40 per cent. of the electorate before he is prepared to have the courage to vote for it. We shall study his interesting statement which, no doubt, will surface in future debates in the same way as his previous speech, which was used to such good effect by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) in opening this debate.

The Secretary of State for Scotland just managed to put his name on the list of those supporting the Government amendment. The Secretary of State for Wales seems to be in a more elevated Government position than the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Rogers: That is as it should be.

Mr. Kirkwood: We welcome strangers in our midst. I am glad that they take part in our debates.

The Government amendment refers to

"no evidence of popular demand".

Hon. Members have dealt earlier with whether there is evidence of popular demand. The amendment refers also to the "benefits" that the present system bestows on the Scottish electorate. Reforms made at any time and in any place are usually attacked and assailed on the basis that there is no demand for the change and that any change given effect would actually make the position worse. The debate has in my submission missed some opportunities to consider the difficulties under which we labour. Is there widespread satisfaction in Scotland with the present system? The House has not, I think, heard enough about that, and I look forward to opportunities in future debates to deploy some of the arguments in greater detail. Members from north of the border do not have enough time to deal with Scottish matters. I do not believe that any of us really think that there is enough time.

There is a burgeoning congestion in the legislative process which we are obliged to consider in this place. There has also been a worrying dilution of the Scottishness —if I can put it that way—in some of our legislation, in civil as well as criminal law, during the past few years. There is real worry and concern about the remoteness of the centralisation that has occurred and that has been referred to earlier. The whole style and approach of the way in which we tackle the legislative process in this House requires urgent and necessary reform. I find it difficult to give proper financial scrutiny to what is going on in St. Andrew's house and during the debates on the Scottish Estimates.

Whatever satisfaction there is in the present system, it is sadly not evident to me. Indeed, quite the reverse is the case. The wholesale reform of this House as well as the need for devolution should be urgent matters on the current policies agenda. There are examples of other countries which do things better. I hope that the debate will contribute to creating demand for discussion on these matters which is needed north of the border.

We have heard from hon. Members of all parties that change for change's sake has its dangers and can bring problems in its train. I accept that and recognise that one-party rule in perpetuity would be difficult. I would say that no matter what party was in power. Even if my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) was in charge of Scotland, I should still make that point, but would make it more quietly. I should still say that it would be a bad thing—[HON. MEMBERS: "It would be the hon. Member who would be in charge."] I am getting more frightened as I go along. I am not making a point against the Labour party but think that that point needs to be made.

Desire for total independence is certainly not constructive, as hon. Members of all parties have stated. There is, too, a worry north of the border that some of the extra powers could be—I put it no higher than that—abused, and that, of course, would be a bad thing. Finally, if we leave the existing system of local government in place, we should be open to the challenge that there was too much government and that the machinery of government north of the border had too many layers. That is why we have put three checks and balances into our motion. The first is the need for a system of proportional representation——

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: While the hon. Gentleman is talking about proportional representation and is doing so well, may I ask him again to give way?

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: Since I was his best man, I give way to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Mr. Foulkes: While the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is talking about proportional representation and advocating it so eloquently, will he tell us when he was converted to it and why, because I remember that when he and I were members of St. Giles ward Labour party he was fervently against it?

Mr. Kirkwood: At least I am honest enough to say that I have changed my mind which is more than some other hon. Members have done.

The other two important checks and balances that are necessary have been carefully considered. They have not been included by accident. The second is the need to remove one tier of local government and the third is the need to tie any constitutional reform of this nature into a rolling programme of United Kingdom-wide reform. With good faith, that could be done.

I should like to pick up on a few of the points that have been raised by Conservative Members. The Government have a problem. As has been said, doing nothing is a political act. If the Government leave the situation as it is, I can see a situation developing where the Conservative party north of the border will be reduced even further in its numbers in the House after the next election. Although I regret it, I can also see that in the United Kingdom as a whole there is a chance that the number of Conservative Members will increase. If that happens, there will be a real problem and it will be much more difficult to solve in four or five years' time.

We should all be honest and open about party advantage. I argue for proportional representation because I believe that the alliance is unfairly represented in terms of the proportion of votes cast north of the border.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: So is the Scottish National party.

Mr. Kirkwood: Yes, indeed. That needs to be put right by proportional representation, but Labour and Conservative Members must also state clearly what their position is. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) has said, it is impossible for us to carry the argument in the Highlands, the south-east and the south-west if the Labour party seeks to control the whole of Scotland from Strathclyde and the central industrial belt. We must face the argument squarely and admit that we are arguing our individual positions on the basis of clear party advantage, but let the electorate judge the merits of the respective arguments.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Will my hon. Friend remind the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), who spoke so passionately just before my hon. Friend, that it is neither right nor fair for the entire city of Glasgow to have no representation whatever other than by the Labour party?

Mr. Kirkwood: I do regret that situation, but the argument can be put the other way round. Apart from the Western Isles, no predominantly agricultural constituency is represented by a Labour Member. That cannot be good for democracy and the machinery of government.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkwood: I will not give way again.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) must accept that he is not the only player in the park. If he goes around slide-tackling potential team mates, as he did today, not only will a red card be deserved but the procurator fiscal of Glasgow should take an interest in the televised action replay. The hon. Gentleman's natural ebullience and enthusiasm sometimes get the better of him. He must be careful not to destroy the possibility of keeping a coherent Opposition together as that will simply let the Government off the hook. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is already chortling to himself and rubbing his hands, waiting for the Opposition to fall out among themselves, which would be to no one's benefit but the hon. Member for Eastwood.

The hon. Member for Eastwood set up a whole string of Aunt Sallys and then invited hon. Members to knock them down. He said that our proposal would lead to confusion, conflict and constitutional difficulty, but what does he think we have now? That is why we are debating this urgent and important issue tonight. The hon. Gentleman set out to frighten people with a whole lot of illogical and irrelevant nonsense.

The hon. Member for Eastwood said that federalism was not on the agenda. I am prepared to take that one on the chin because we propose to put federalism on the agenda.

Mr. Allan Stewart: That is not what the leader of the Liberal party said. He made it clear that what was on the agenda was an assembly, or parliament as the hon. Gentleman would call it, and not federalism.

Mr. Kirkwood: Our motion refers to the proposal being the first step.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) made a useful and thoughtful contribution. If that is how he intends to continue the debate, I shall be happy to respond in kind. He said that it was wrong to make proportional representation a precondition for talks. I seek as strenuously as I can to persuade my colleagues that it should not be a precondition of talks, but they must recognise that it is an important part of our philosophy and our sincerely held principles. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East spoke about local government. I recognise his experience of local government and accordingly will listen carefully to what he has to say. We might be able to get around some of the points he raised by strengthening community councils. He must also consider the difficulty of how a region of the size and importance of Strathclyde would sit comfortably with an elected Scottish assembly north of the border. Over-government is a card which the opponents of devolution will use. If we who support the principle do not address it somehow, it will be to our detriment because the Opposition will continually use it to effect against us.

Mr. Harry Ewing: I tried to interrupt the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), when he was speaking about Strathclyde, to point out that he was the Minister who, together with the Secretary of State for Defence, bulldozed the Local Government Bill through the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) moved an amendment in Committee to stop Strathclyde being divided into four sub-regions. He was the Minister who rejected my right hon. Friend's constructive amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I can tell the hon. Member for Falkirk, East that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) went out of his way to say that people should not take dogmatic views on these matters. We live in hope that together we will persuade him of the error of his ways.

I was struck by the speech of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) who said—he qualified it, and I look forward to reading his speech—that if the Government were to bring forward a Bill

[Mr. Kirkwood]

which contained proportional representation, he would be prepared to support it. On behalf of my hon. Friends, I want to make it clear to the House that there is no difference on this Bench on that question. If there were a Second Reading debate on the Floor of the House this evening which did not deal with proportional representation, we would vote against it. However, we are not anywhere near that situation yet. At this stage in the public debate we are prepared to argue our corner constructively with anyone. The real prospect of legislation would come only from a sympathetic Government, so we shall have wait for another Government and carefully consider the position presented to us at that time.

In conclusion, the prospectus that we have set out for the House to consider in this motion is in our view a systematic and considered way to bring forward a rolling programme of reform. I am convinced that, given good will, it is possible to effect changes for the better in the government of Scotland. I seek support from both sides of the House. There has been some talk about splits one way or the other. I believe that, if we are honest about it, the splits are across parties as well as between parties and across the Floor of the House. There are strands of feeling and different nuances in all parties—and rightly so—on this important issue. In bringing forward this motion, we are right to seek support from both sides of the House. We desperately need a more democratic system of government, a less remote system of government, a system which is more responsive and less bureaucratic, a more modern and less class-based system of government for Scotland and for the United Kingdom. An essential element of our motion is a United Kingdom-wide method of devolution of political power. It should contain some system of proportionality, and some reductions in the structure of local government.

I shall end with this important plea: whatever our view of our particular party advantage, whatever our differences at this stage of the public debate, we need to come together as Opposition parties and express our opposition to the status quo. Even if we could agree that the current position does not measure up to the needs and demands made on it today, it would be a small step forward. It would put the onus squarely on the Government to justify their denial in principle of the system of decentralised political power that Scotland wants and needs.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): This has been a wide-ranging debate in what has become a long-running saga. It has been in the nature of an hors d'oeuvres in preparation for the Bill that will come forward in due course from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and others spoke of the demand for devolution. I want to address the question: how substantial is that demand? It was precisely that matter that prompted me to ask the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot):

"In the event of the Government failing to get a Second Reading for the devolution Bill, will the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues consider the use of a referendum"?

The right hon. Gentleman, who was then the Leader of the House, replied:

"That is not the right way to proceed". — [*Official Report*, 3 August 1976; Vol. 916-1, c. 1465.]

As it happened, the Bill received a Second Reading, but then failed because of insufficient support for a guillotine from Labour Members. The subject of a referendum came back on to the agenda in an attempt to persuade more Labour Members to vote for the Bill, but many of them were so deeply uneasy that they supported George Cunningham's 40 per cent. rule, which prevented the implementation of the Scotland Act. Of course, Mr. Cunningham is now a member of the SDP.

During that Parliament, I received only 12 letters about devolution—half for and half against. The referendum was extremely inconclusive and did not provide a sound basis for fundamental constitutional reform. Some 1·1 million people voted for it, a greater number did not vote and 1·2 million voted against it. Many of Scotland's islands and regions voted against it, including Orkney and Shetland and The Borders—both represented by Liberal Members of Parliament — Dumfries, Galloway, Grampian and Tayside. In those circumstances, the Secretary of State was entitled to reach the view, in the Scottish Grand Committee of 30 June 1986:

"we have to accept that if in Scotland there is for all practical purposes a dead heat, if in Wales there is a large majority against devolution and if in England there is clearly major opposition to devolution, we cannot sensibly embark on a system of fundamental constitutional change . . . based on a tiny majority of those who bother to vote in one part of the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 30 June 1986; c. 10-11.]

Mr. Maxton: As the Minister has referred to the Labour Government of 1974 to 1979, will he confirm that, together with the then hon. Member representing Cathcart, he had in his election address—as the Tory party did in its Scottish election manifesto — a commitment to establish a Scottish assembly with tax-raising powers?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. There was never any suggestion of the Conservative party supporting a separate Executive nor of tax-raising powers. The Douglas-Home scheme was a minimalist scheme and did not imply a separate Executive.

I must tell the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) that the poll to which the Secretary of State referred is not the only poll. I have with me an earlier poll, published in *The Scotsman*, which asked:

"what do you think are the two or three most important election issues?"

Unemployment rated 62 per cent., the Health Service 31 per cent., pensions 24 per cent. and housing—mentioned by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) — 19 per cent. Towards the bottom of the list AIDS rated 4 per cent. and below that devolution rated only 2 per cent.

Dr. Reid: The Minister has misconstrued my point. If he has the full list, will he refer to around the 4 per cent. mark, as the Secretary of State did?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I did, and devolution rated 2 per cent. However, as I said, it is an earlier poll.

Of the substantial reasons for opposing the motion, the first relates to the office of Secretary of State and the number of Scottish Members of Parliament. I have beside me a significant document, which every student of

devolution will have read, entitled, "Don't Butcher Scotland's Future," written by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), whom I am glad to see here, and Mr. Jim Sillars, the then secretary of the Ayr constituency Labour party. The document states:

"we must meet the challenge of the Scottish National Party"—

something which Mr. Sillars has since done by joining it. There is one paragraph in the document with which I wholeheartedly agree. It states:

"We start off determined to retain two basic essentials to future Scottish progress. We must keep for Scotland her seat in the British Cabinet as of right and we must continue to send our large number of Scottish MPs to the Parliament at Westminster where, no matter what happens, crucial decisions bearing on Scotland and all of the British Isles will continue to be taken."

This is a matter of considerable sensitivity.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During the devolution debate in the 1970s, the most memorable exchange which I witnessed took place between the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), who then represented Glasgow, Cathcart. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said:

"let me remind him of what was said on 19th August 1974 in *The Scotsman*. It was reported:

'Mr. John Smith, M.P. for North Lanark, claimed that members of the party who were pressing for devolution to a Scottish Government without the loss of the office of the Secretary of State and a reduction in the number of M.P.s at Westminster were being dishonest.'"—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 185.]

I would not go so far as that, but those who believe that the creation of a Scottish Parliament will not inevitably affect the office of Secretary of State and claim that it could be retained with a seat in the Cabinet are being wholly unrealistic. The leader of the Liberal party, to his credit, made an admission to that effect. [HON. MEMBERS: "An assertion."] He also made a significant assertion that there would be fewer Scottish Members of Parliament. The office of Secretary of State, stripped of a block grant for Scotland which would go to the Scottish Executive, without a Department, and lacking the powers to legislate on a wide range of subjects, would diminish in importance and influence and become a cypher.

My next point concerns the reduction in the number of Members of Parliament which the leader of the Liberal party is prepared to accept, but there are many Labour Members who do not want to see the number of Scottish Members reduced. The fact is that Scotland now has more Members of Parliament than on a pro rata basis can be justified, on the grounds of geographical circumstances and by the fact that we have a different legal system and, in some respects, a different way of life. However, these arguments would not apply if there were a separate Scottish Parliament. If housing, health, education and all substantial Scottish Office responsibilities were given to a Scottish Parliament, there could be no compelling justification for Scotland having such a high representation of Members of Parliament. In the one part of the United Kingdom which has had devolved Parliament, the number of Members of Parliament was considerably reduced and there was no seat in the Cabinet.

My second objection to the Bill relates to the West Lothian question.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman has described the situation correctly and has made his objection, but he has not produced any argument to support it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That argument was put forward by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North when he referred to the "Don't Butcher Scotland's Future" document, which states:

"It is common knowledge that the Scottish economy became fully integrated with the rest of the UK. during the first industrial revolution. Industrial and financial patterns set at that time have grown so profound that to separate them now would be as difficult as extracting the original acorn from a great oak."

I do not want to see a reduction in the influence of Scottish Members in the House. I believe that their influence should stretch to all parts of the United Kingdom and beyond.

The leader of the Liberal party made an assertion that there is no answer to the West Lothian question. I recognise that to some extent federalism would avoid the problem, but that assumes that all parts of the United Kingdom would accept federalism. There is no evidence of demand for such a far-reaching change in England and Wales.

In order to ascertain the intention of the Labour party Front-Bench spokesman on the West Lothian question, I asked the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) a question in the Standing Committee on the Local Government Bill. I asked him: if there were a Scottish assembly, would Scottish Members give up their right to vote on English domestic issues? That is a simple question, but he did not have a simple answer. He said:

"there may be a brief period of two or three years in which Scottish Members will be interfering in English domestic affairs, but that will quickly disappear."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 21 July 1987; c. 20.]

The hon. Gentleman mentioned two or three years, but why not four, five, six or even eight or nine years? If Scottish matters are to be devolved to a Scottish Parliament and Scottish Members cannot vote on them, why should they be allowed to vote on the equivalent English subjects instead? The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) said that he does not want to vote, but Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have the authority and it is they who wish to introduce the Bill. They have made no such assertion and I do not believe they will.

An assembly would be a recipe for strife. Conflict would be built in. We would be on a one-way street to independence. An Edinburgh assembly would concentrate power, not devolve it. Those are not my words but the words of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Minister is making a powerful point about the recipe for conflict on the basis of the proposals before the House. As one of only 10 Scottish Conservative Members out of 72, how does he justify his job as a Minister at the Scottish Office imposing radical changes on the people of Scotland when they do not want and did not vote for the changes?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We fought the British election on British terms. It is significant that the Labour party has formed three Governments since the war in which it failed to have a majority of English Members. Indeed, the nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry, which went through on only one vote, is a good example.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The majority of English Members voted against that measure and the balance was tipped by Scottish Members. Sometimes the results of a British election work in favour of the Opposition and sometimes the Government. On the basis of the present constitution, that is fair and should be accepted.

The next and most weighty objection to the motion is the fact that an assembly would have revenue-raising powers. The alliance's manifesto narrates that the

"Scottish Parliament would have substantial powers to assist and guide the Scottish economy."

That is said to be achieved through its decision on the overall level of public spending and the allocation of spending between the programmes for which it will be responsible.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman is talking about revenue-raising powers. He was reminded by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party of what Lord Douglas-Home said at the time of the referendum. Did the Minister agree with Lord Douglas-Home when he said that the defect of the Scotland Act 1978 was that it lacked revenue-raising powers?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I did not agree with that assertion. The Conservative party has never been committed to tax-raising powers for a Scottish assembly. If the hon. Gentleman does his homework he will find out that what I say is correct. The Conservative party has always been opposed to the creation of a separate Executive. The objectives in the motion can be achieved only by raising the level of personal taxation in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am sorry; I shall not give way. I have just given way. I have many points to make and I do not have much time left.

Also, the objectives can be achieved only by taking resources from more profitable industries to subsidise uncompetitive industries, so driving away the very industries that we want to encourage.

Mrs. Ewing: I am most grateful to the Minister for giving way on this vital point, since he and his Government consistently argue that, if there were a devolved assembly or a Parliament in Scotland, Scottish people would be subjected to additional taxation. What does he say about the current situation, whereby domestic and business ratepayers in Scotland pay far in excess of their counterparts south of the border? How does he square that?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is precisely why we wish to reform the rating system in favour of a fairer system of taxation.

We are discussing differentially higher tax rates in Scotland. They will have a depressing and, possibly, destructive effect on the Scottish economy and lead to the emigration of capital and labour. That point was touched on by various hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine).

Inward investment is important. In 1981, the Locate in Scotland organisation was set up as a joint venture between the Scottish Office and the Scottish Development Agency. In its six-year existence, it has helped to attract planned investment of about £2·6 billion and to create and safeguard about 46,000 jobs.

In the House of Commons, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said:

"Any power to raise revenue in Scotland would create a tax unique to Scotland, which therefore would be politically unacceptable to the Scots and administratively cumbersome to the civil servants." [*Official Report*, 14 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 161.]

Higher rates of tax would be likely to lead to higher wage demands, and that, too, would act as a constraint on the creation of new jobs. Higher income tax in Scotland might cause a brain drain to other parts of the United Kingdom and abroad. Indeed, further taxation would be damaging to jobs. In the past, various hon. Members—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall not give way. I have only about three minutes left.

There is no evidence to believe that higher income tax would lead to the economic regeneration of Scotland. It is perfectly true that, in the 1970s, the world recession, sparked off by the oil crisis, led to severe problems in certain obsolescent industries. That would have been the case whether there had been an assembly or not.

I shall mention some undeniable facts. In 1986-87 the identical public expenditure per head had a United Kingdom average of £2,057. Public expenditure per head was £1,967 for England and £2,518 for Scotland. That means that £551 more is spent on every person resident in Scotland every year than on each person resident in England.

The Government's policies, in the framework of the existing constitutional arrangements, are beginning to show results. For example, the latest figures of gross domestic product per head and personal disposable income per head show Scotland to rate third among the 11 United Kingdom planning regions, behind only the south-east and East Anglia. Also, average male weekly earnings in Scotland, at £224 in April of this year, are higher than in any part of the United Kingdom, outside the south-east. Unemployment is now firmly on a downward trend, with a fall of 34,000 in the seasonally adjusted figures. The growth of manufacturing productivity in Scotland in recent years has been consistently higher than in the United Kingdom as a whole.

I do not want to see the role of the Secretary of State or of hon. Members diminished. I do not want to see endless conflict between rival Parliaments, or job losses as a result of a further system of taxation. I ask my hon. Friends to oppose the motion for those reasons.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 24, Noes 223.

Division No. 78] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Lambie, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Livsey, Richard
Beith, A. J.	Maclennan, Robert
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Salmond, Alex
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Steel, Rt Hon David
Cartwright, John	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Howells, Geraint	Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Wigley, Dafydd
Johnston, Sir Russell	
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kennedy, Charles	Mr. James Wallace and
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. Ronnie Fearn.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Knapman, Roger
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 220, Noes 161.

Division No. 79] **[10.12 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Knapman, Roger
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Wilson, Brian

Winnick, David
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House rejects as irrelevant to the wellbeing of Scotland arguments for constitutional change for which there is no evidence of popular demand; acknowledges the benefits that Scotland enjoys from the existing arrangements; and rejects any proposals for constitutional change that could undermine the unity of the United Kingdom.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at tomorrow's sitting, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put any Questions necessary to dispose of the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Agriculture and on any Amendments thereto which have been selected by him and which may then be moved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

PETITION

Rating Reform

10.24 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On behalf of my constituents at Coatbridge college, including the principal of the college, the lecturer and students of the college, I wish to present a petition to the House which invites the House to use its influence to seek the repeal of the Act of Parliament which will lead in turn to the community charge or poll tax which my constituents believe will be of considerable disadvantage especially to students and student nurses.

The petition

Sheweth that the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act provides for the introduction in Scotland of the system of Community Charge or Poll Tax which will impose upon the people of Scotland a system of local taxation which will take no account of the ability of the citizens to afford such taxation and will cause hardship to many who are already poor.

The Community Charge or Poll Tax will cause the redistribution of resources away from poor areas into areas which are already prosperous.

Wherefore your petitioners pray That your Honourable House do all in its power to ensure the repeal of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the table.

Housing (Disabled People)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Macleon]*

10.26 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House, in my first Adjournment debate, a matter which is not only of great concern to many of my constituents and in particular to many of my local authority representatives, but which I believe has implications for disabled people in the Motherwell district and throughout Scotland.

The sale of housing for the disabled was brought to my attention initially by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and, more importantly in this case, by Motherwell district council. The district council's concern arose out of a recent Lands Tribunal of Scotland decision which, following an appeal, ruled that a council tenant had the right in certain circumstances and in law to acquire, in terms of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, a house specifically built and let for the use of disabled people.

The basis of the Lands Tribunal's decision was that, although there are certain types of purpose-built houses which can be retained in the housing stock, houses specifically built for the disabled which do not have a call system or the services of a warden are not protected by the legislation and are required to be sold if the tenants apply to acquire such houses.

I now want to outline to the House the background of the decision and the serious implications for Scotland's disabled and for councils which inevitably flow from the decision. Over the course of time, Motherwell district council has built about 30 homes for the disabled—a term which includes a considerable number of elderly people who have suffered disability in old age. Those houses were built in various locations in the district, usually as two semi-detached houses within an overall development of traditional houses. The houses have such features as ramps with a handrail at front and rear, handrails in the entrance hall, lifting hooks in the bedroom with bathroom en suite with fitted grab rails, connecting sliding doors between living room and bedroom, specialist kitchen fittings and electric sockets fitted at a level to suit wheelchair users. I am sure that hon. Members will appreciate from that brief description the cost involved and the architectural and manufacturing adaptability required to ensure that the disabled section of our society — which is particularly vulnerable and faces special difficulties—might have some comfort provided through the services and auspices of local authorities.

As you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, those specialised homes for the disabled in my constituency have all the features of housing stock which, under the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, would preclude them from being bought by those who may not require such extensive features. The one factor that takes the 30 or so homes out of the purview of the 1980 Act is that they have been scattered through the ordinary stock without a call system or the services of a warden. As a result, they are not protected by the Act. If I may elaborate on that, I am sure that the House will appreciate that amendments were incorporated in the Housing Act 1980 which preclude the

[Dr. John Reid]

sale of houses for the disabled or elderly if they have an intercom system, a common call system, or a common warden.

Much of the recent medical and sociological evidence given to councils is that they should attempt to avoid creating ghettos for the disabled or the elderly. Following that advice, and keeping in mind the best services that could be provided for disabled and elderly people, Motherwell district council, like other district councils in Scotland, took the view that they would place housing adapted for disabled people throughout the district.

I note the Lands Tribunal decision with concern and envisage that a number of consequences will result. First, I am concerned about the depletion of the stock of homes for disabled people. Motherwell district council's view is that as there are so few houses of this type, because of the high cost of construction, it is imperative that such houses are retained for a succession of disabled people — the very people for whom the houses were constructed. Unfortunately, once sold, there is no guarantee that a particular house will be available for a disabled person in future.

The tenants of houses for disabled people accept the council's conditions of tenancy which contain the provisions that the council may terminate the tenancy by means of a court action as provided in condition 15, which states that

"the dwelling house has been designed or adapted for occupation by a person whose special needs require accommodation of the kind provided by the dwelling house and if there is no longer a person with such special needs occupying the dwelling house and the council requires it for occupation by a person who such special needs, it will be given to him or to her."

If special needs no longer prevail, the person in question must return the house to the council. Under current legislation a tenant is entitled to buy a house, so the council is deprived of that power contained in the missive of let. That deprives future generations of disabled people of access to a house that has been specifically constructed for their special needs.

People who are not disabled may be attracted to a house because of its convenience features. It might be surprising that a house that has been specially constructed for disabled people is attractive to a person who is not disabled, but many features, such as an en suite toilet and bathroom might be attractive to someone who wishes to purchase a house for conversion. Some features to assist the disabled might be attractive to a non-disabled person.

The 1980 Act provides the right of pre-emption for such houses and the council takes the view that re-purchase is likely to be costly, since the Act provides that the re-purchase should be at market value.

Motherwell district council, and many others which follow its progressive policy of dispersing housing for disabled people throughout the community, are being penalised for building special homes throughout the community instead of grouping them together. For the sake of expediency councils are being encouraged to disregard the medical and sociological evidence that such houses should be placed in the heart of the community where disabled people can live alongside people who do not have disabilities. Councils will be reluctant to build houses for disabled people in the community because those houses might be bought and never replaced due to prohibitive costs.

To sum up, the present position may lead to, first, a lack of provision of houses for the disabled; secondly, a lack of resources to build and replace such homes; and, thirdly, unfair and insensitive treatment of disabled people. The crux of the debate is that concessions from the Government in the 1980 legislation were narrowly drawn and, ultimately, harmful to those who were supposed to be helped by it by the specific provision that houses for the disabled or the elderly within the call system with a warden would be exempt.

Disabled people who want special homes in the community should not be segregated into ghettos. I do not raise this matter under the illusion that there will be an instant remedy. I might even go so far as to say that I could be convinced that the Government did not intend to allow these sales, since the 1980 legislation specifically excludes many of the houses for the elderly and disabled which I mentioned. I do not question the Government's intentions or motives; I merely point to the fact that, because the 1980 legislation was so narrowly drawn, there is a problem with many of these houses.

I have raised this matter in the hope that, by highlighting this anomaly, an effective remedy will be found soon. The people who will benefit are not hon. Members, the Opposition or the Government or even district councils such as Motherwell, but those for whom I am sure the whole House wishes provision to be made —the disabled. Surely they deserve all the facilities that can be provided by local authorities or the House.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) on bringing to the attention of the House the subject of housing for the disabled. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this subject, and I share the hon. Gentleman's view of its great importance. Indeed, I visited Motherwell district council this summer and saw some of these houses.

The Government's aim is to ensure that disabled people are accommodated in ways best suited to their individual needs. Wherever possible, we believe that the disabled should be integrated fully into the wider community, but we also encourage the provision of housing specially for the physically disabled, where this is required.

During the parliamentary stages of what is now the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, consideration was given to whether all amenity housing for the disabled should be automatically exempted from the right to buy. The Government's view at that time was, and remains, that it would not be appropriate for the right to buy to apply to sheltered houses for the disabled — that is houses with a call system and the services of a warden. But where a house is not a fully sheltered dwelling, even if it has features substantially different from an ordinary house, the Government take the view that the right to buy should apply. We believe that disabled persons should be treated wherever possible no differently from other members of the community. They should not, therefore, be discriminated against through being denied the same opportunity of home ownership as other tenants. To exclude from the right to buy all houses for disabled people would, we feel, discriminate unfairly against a group of

people who, because of their disability, are already at a disadvantage. Many disabled persons are young and in employment. Clearly, they will be well able to take on the responsibility of home ownership. We believe that they are entitled to the same right to purchase their homes as other tenants. Similarly, we believe that those tenants whose children are disabled, and who occupy houses suitable for the disabled, should also have a right to buy.

While the legislation acknowledges the rights of disabled persons, it also allows the landlord to impose a pre-emption condition on the sale. Where a house has facilities that are substantially different from those of an ordinary house, and has been designed or adapted for occupation by a disabled person whose special needs require accommodation of the kind provided by the house, a landlord can have the first option to buy the house back in the event that it is subsequently resold by the disabled purchaser. This provides the necessary safeguard to prevent houses which have been adapted for disabled people being sold subsequently to people with no disability.

It has been argued that such pre-emption conditions can mean the landlord incurring unreasonable additional expense, because the original sale would have been at a discount and the repurchase will be at market value. However, I repeat our view that the disabled should have the same opportunity to purchase under the right to buy as all other tenants. A right-to-buy sale of a house suitable for a disabled person generates at the time of sale a receipt for the landlord in the same way as the sale of any other council house. This receipt can then be used by the authority, for example, to modernise or improve other houses in its stock, to the benefit of the remaining tenants. We believe that the benefits from the receipts generated by right-to-buy sales generally far outweigh the costs incurred by a landlord exercising the right of pre-emption.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received a number of representations recently from hon. Members, from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and from housing authorities and other organisations on the question of the sale of houses for the disabled. While the Secretary of State has no discretion in such cases, and I am unable to comment on individual applications, our view remains, for the reasons that I have already given, that disabled people should not be discriminated against. Although we have studied these representations thoroughly, and I have listened carefully to the hon. Member's comments tonight, we have no plans to amend the legislation.

It has been suggested that sales of houses adapted or constructed for disabled people hit at the disabled by reducing the stock of houses specially provided to meet their needs. I do not share that view. Our research into the uptake of the right to buy suggests that most tenants, had they not bought their houses, would have continued as tenants in the same houses for substantial periods. This is almost certainly even more true in the case of disabled people. Their houses would not, therefore, have become available for re-letting on a time scale that is relevant to the current or foreseeable needs of those on authorities' waiting lists.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I remember debating this part of the legislation back in 1980, when the Labour party warned the Government that exactly this kind of situation might arise. I am sure that we all understand the Minister's anxiety to ensure that disabled people should be able to take advantage of the scheme, but is it really fair that local authorities, such as Motherwell district council should have to foot the bill for that? If the Minister wants to operate the scheme, why does he not compensate district councils, such as Motherwell, to enable them to replace the specialist housing stock that they are losing?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I think that I answered that question earlier. We believe that disabled people should have the right to buy, in the same way as all other tenants, and a right-to-buy sale of a house suitable for a disabled person generates at the time of sale a receipt for the landlord in the same way as does the sale of other council houses. We do not believe that disabled people should be disadvantaged in relation to the rights of others. One must balance the rights of the disabled person as against the convenience of the local authority. In this instance, we came down firmly in favour of the rights of the disabled person.

Dr. Reid: I thank the Minister for giving way, but I think that perhaps he has missed the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Surely the point is that under this system there will be a continuous vicious circle whereby the accumulated debts and deficits occuring from the sale of council houses at a discount, and their repurchase, which must be at market value, will mean that accumulated deficits and financial disadvantages will be laid at the door of Motherwell district council, the very council which, in the first instance, went out of its way to try to provide a service to disabled persons.

If the Minister accepts that the council has to sell at a discount and repurchase at full market value—a process that could happen more than once in relation to the same property — and if he is so concerned to ensure that disabled people have that opportunity, would it not be fairer for the Government to put their money where their mouth is and make up the deficit incurred by the district council as a result of the scheme?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Housing support grant is available to compensate an authority when the loan charge costs of the repurchase of houses, and all other capital costs, would require over-high rents to balance the account.

I accept that it is extremely necessary to ensure sufficient provision of housing for the physically disabled. Between 1979 and 1987 the number of dwellings available for the disabled through public agencies—that is, local authorities, new towns, the SSHA and housing associations — increased from around 3,000 to some 15,500. Of the current stock, some 2,300 are designed or adapted for wheelchair users, around 3,200 for the ambulant disabled, and the remainder are adapted for those with other disabilities. The current total of 2,300 wheelchair dwellings has increased from 600 in 1979 and now represents 0·2 per cent. of the total stock owned by public agencies.

Housing associations play a significant part in the provision of rented housing for both the physically and the mentally handicapped. The Housing Corporation's approved development programme includes a specific funding category for such provision. In the four years to

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

March 1987, expenditure on schemes specifically for the disabled totalled £30 million, with 345 physically disabled and 403 mentally handicapped units being provided. This year the corporation plans to spend some £7 million, and already 91 physically disabled and 36 mentally handicapped units have been completed.

Provision for the disabled by the housing association movement in Scotland is concentrated mainly on three specialist associations—the Margaret Blackwood, Ark and Key housing associations. These associations are highly regarded for the level of commitment, experience and expertise that they bring to their chosen area of work. They provide a very varied range of accommodation. This includes group homes and hostels which can offer a high degree of care for the severely disabled, sheltered complexes providing warden support, and individual mainstream houses linked with neighbourhood support schemes. The funding arrangements for these projects demonstrate the effective partnership between central and local government. The capital costs are met by central Government through the Housing Corporation, and the regional social work departments meet the cost of the necessary care.

Housing association provision for the disabled does not stop with those three Associations. The concept of care in the community can be seen in the increasing number of mainstream housing associations incorporating units for the disabled within their general needs housing schemes. This is a positive step towards de-institutionalising the disabled and ensuring that disabled people are properly integrated into the general community.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again. If he cannot answer this question straight away, perhaps he will write to me. Am I correct in understanding that the same situation does not prevail in England under English legislation? If so, does that not make nonsense of the rationale and justification that the Minister is tendering today?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I acknowledge that the position is different in Scotland, and has been so for some time. However, I see no reason why Parliament should not have agreed a difference of approach. To put it another way, tenants who are disabled, or who have a disabled family member, generally have the right in Scotland at present to purchase their homes under the right to buy, with the pre-emption condition. I believe that we should weigh the position very carefully indeed before we dilute those rights.

I return to my basic point: why should the disabled be further disadvantaged by not being able, as are other members of society, to exercise the right to buy the council houses in which they live? I believe that the balance between the interests of landlords and tenants is about right at present. I have no plans, therefore, to bring forward amending legislation on this particular aspect. It is only fair to say so quite frankly.

I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about groups of houses. He is obviously interested in that point, and I shall explain the position. Section 61(4)(*a*) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 exempts from the right-to-buy provisions any house

"that is one of a group provided with facilities (including a call system and the services of a warden) specially designed or adapted for the needs of persons of pensionable age or disabled persons."

The Act is not specific as to whether the warden requires to be resident within the group of houses. It is not for the Government to interpret a statute—that is a matter for the courts. However, the absense of any specific reference to a warden may be significant. As the Court of Session has been asked to consider the issues raised in a case of this nature, it would be inappropriate for me to say more tonight.

Whether disabled persons own their homes, or are tenants of a private or public sector landlord, special help is available by means of improvement grants. These can meet up to 75 per cent. of the cost of making the house suitable for the welfare, accommodation or employment of a disabled person. To enable these grants to be made widely available to disabled occupants, the statutory requirements on rateable value limits—in the case of owner-occupiers—and the age of the house have been disapplied.

A standard amenity grant of 50 per cent. is available, as of right for the provision of alternative standard amenities where existing ones are inaccessible to, or unsuitable for, a disabled person. In most cases, adaptations to make public sector houses suitable for a particular disabled person will be undertaken by the housing authority. However, following the introduction of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, tenants of public sector houses may apply for grants on the same conditions as private owners or tenants.

The Scottish housing White Paper published on 11 November made it clear that under proposals for the reform of the improvement and repairs grants system in Scotland grants will continue to be available to adapt houses for the benefit of disabled people. Detailed proposals for the reform of the Scottish grants system are being developed, and it is not possible at this stage to go beyond the outline of the proposals in the White Paper.

Finally, I should perhaps say a little about the size of the physically disabled population in Scotland. The exact proportion of the total population who are physically disabled is difficult to determine accurately. A survey published in 1971 suggested that about 6 per cent. of the total population of Scotland suffer from some form of physical or sensory impairment. That number can be divided into four main categories: 61 per cent. have negligible or minor impairments, and can live normal independent lives. Many of those will have no special housing need; 21 per cent. have appreciable impairments, but are able to get out and around on their own; and 12 per cent. are severely impaired, and may occasionally use a wheelchair. Many of those people can still walk, however, and can get out and around if accompanied, or if they use a walking-aid. The remaining 6 per cent. are very severely impaired, and frequently require a wheelchair to move around. Many are either wheelchair-bound or bedfast. Some of this group will be in need of constant care or special medical facilities.

Although the numbers of disabled people are therefore relatively small, the Government do not underestimate the size of the problem involved in meeting their housing needs. This is reflected in the fivefold increase in public

sector housing suitable for the disabled since 1979. The number of such dwellings has increased from just over 3,000 to 15,500 at March 1987.

As I have already indicated, not all physically handicapped people require special housing. A considerable number of those who are ambulant can be well and comfortably accommodated in housing that is not significantly different from mainstream housing. The Government are actively encouraging the concept of barrier-free housing. The main aim is to eliminate, by design, from as many general needs houses and flats as practicable, those features that otherwise would prevent dwellings from being occupied by, for example, a disabled person who may only require a wheelchair from time to time.

Our aim is to ensure that such barriers can be eliminated without increasing the recommended space standards or cost yardsticks. Particularly suitable for that approach are single storey houses or flats; any house with a bathroom, kitchen, living room and at least one bedroom at ground level; and two-storey houses that can accommodate a stair lift. Taken in total, therefore, it should be possible for disabled persons readily to occupy a substantial percentage of mainstream housing, without major structural alterations or additions being necessary.

However, some disabled people—for example those who are handicapped by multiple sclerosis, strokes or arthritis—require to be permanently in a wheelchair, or need large items of equipment. A major contribution to meeting their needs can be made by adapting existing properties in ways which meet the specific needs of the known occupier. To assist with these adaptations, housing authorities have a duty to make improvement grants available to the public and private sectors to allow provision of additional standard amenities essential to the needs of a disabled occupant. Such amenities include floor lifts, special doors and windows, ramps, and special bath, shower or kitchen units. In order to clarify where the financial responsibility for the provision of such aids and equipment should lie, the Government issued an advice circular in 1985. This has helped practitioners in the field to deal with those cases which otherwise might have caused problems.

We must not forget, too, that people of all ages suffer from handicaps and require specially designed housing. For example, families where a child is disabled may require to be suitably housed to meet the child's needs. In the assessment of the need for such housing, consultation between housing, health and social work services departments is essential. Similarly, it is important that the placing of a person in a specially designed or adapted house should be co-ordinated. The disabled person needs the support of both statutory and voluntary services to ensure that he receives the level of personal care that is essential——

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 24 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Thames Regions (Cash Reductions)

1. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has given to the four Thames regions regarding the specific services to be cut in order to meet their cash reduction over the next three years.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Before I answer the question, may I take this opportunity to express the regret of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at being unable to be here today because he is unwell?

There are no plans for cash reductions. The overall cash increase projected for the next three years is about 15 per cent. Health authority allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly.

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the Minister for his answer, but I fail to understand why, therefore, regional and district health authorities are all having to discuss how to meet the cuts that the Government are imposing. What does the Minister have to say about the findings of the medical committee of the South East Thames regional health authority that it is not unusual for breast surgery to be cancelled four or five times? What does he say to the terrified women whose lives may depend on swift and effective surgery and who are being treated in this disgraceful way so that Government financial guidelines can be met?

Mr. Newton: The Government have made clear their plans for the further development of breast cancer screening services and for ensuring that appropriate treatment is available. Additional moneys were made available to the Thames regions, under the heading of the so-called resource allocation working party bridging fund, last year. There will be further allocations under that heading in the allocations that are to be announced shortly.

Mr. Maples: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the South East Thames region, the Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority has pioneered such innovations as cross-charging for out-of-district use and is selling services to the private sector and to other district health authorities? Will he consider encouraging authorities to extend the use of such market mechanisms in the context of a free NHS, to widen choice and improve services?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly very much encourage all health authorities to examine such measures, which can assist in improving the services that we all want to be provided. The Lewisham and North Southwark district is also a good illustration of something else important—the massive capital investment taking place at Guy's.

Mr. Tony Banks: Would the Minister be prepared, after Questions today, to meet a delegation of doctor and nurses from St. Thomas's hospital on the other side of the river, in which 137 beds have been closed? Is he aware that that hospital serves the needs of Members of the House of Commons—or at least those who have not made private arrangements?

I do not wish ill on any Conservative Members, but if they all have a heart attack at the same time in the same massage parlour there will be a great strain on the health services, and particularly on St. Thomas's, where there will not be enough beds.

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I discussed some of these problems last week at a meeting with a consultant from St. Thomas's, and I shall take into account what he said when considering some of the matters to which I have already referred.

Mr. Squire: Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite his welcome news about continuing increases in money for the regions, somehow or other in many districts—certainly in my region of North East Thames—there are still just as many difficulties as there ever were? Will he look again at the basis of allocation for the district health authorities?

Mr. Newton: We are reviewing what is called RAWP at the national level, and we are discussing with the regions the operation of their allocation policies at the sub-regional level. Of course, I shall take account of my hon. Friend's point.

Flu Vaccines

2. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the state of supplies of flu vaccines within the National Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Vaccination for flu is a selective programme recommended only for at-risk groups. The number of doses given in recent winters has varied between 1·4 million and 1·6 million, but demand this winter appears, for extraneous reasons, to have increased to more than 2 million doses. That is 25 per cent. higher than normal. We expect some 2·2 million doses to have been delivered by next week.

Mr. Lamond: Is the Minister aware that as long ago as early October constituents of mine were being turned away by their doctors, especially at the Royton health centre? They were told that no flu vaccine was available and that if they wished they could put down their names for next year. It is obvious from press reports in the last few days that this situation is widespread. Surely the Minister realises that this is preventive medicine at its best and that to have allowed flu vaccine supplies to dry up was a grave mistake.

Mrs. Currie: I hope that the figures I have just given show that rather than flu vaccine supplies drying up, they have substantially increased this year. I understand that the scare stories running in the press resulted from a press conference held by an organisation called the Influenza

Monitoring and Information Bureau which is run and funded by the three companies which produce the vaccine. We have no evidence whatever of any such epidemic or of any such scare having any basis in actuality.

Qualified Medical Laboratory Scientific Staff

3. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what reports he has received on the problem of retaining qualified medical laboratory scientific staff within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We are aware of reports of problems in some areas.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Minister accept that medical laboratory scientific officers are highly qualified people and an integral and essential part of patient care? Does she agree that they are grossly underpaid and will she now agree to include them in the pay review body as soon as possible?

Mrs. Currie: We do indeed regard them as very important people. The hon. Gentleman may not know that last week the staff side of committee A of the appropriate Whitley council accepted the offer of a 5 per cent. increase in pay and allowances, that this has been back dated to 1 April 1987, and payment of it is now in hand. However, we accept that there are problems with the present grading structure and we have commissioned an independent study covering the whole subject of the provision of pathology staff. We hope that the results of that study will shortly be available.

Mr. Michael Morris: My hon. Friend will be aware that I wrote to her on this subject. I welcome her response to the grading study. Does she now accept that the laboratory staff have patient contact and that they are a vital link in the chain of medical care? We need to retain the most senior ones with experience, and the study should concentrate on them.

Mrs. Currie: I hear what my hon. Friend says and thank him for his kind remarks. I understand that the difficulty is in retaining the basic grades, and therefore the study will pay a great deal of attention to that.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Minister supplement the 5 per cent. salary increase with uniform payments? I am sure she will agree that that would reduce the high turnover and lift the morale of this vital but underpaid sector of the Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: We shall take the hon. Gentleman's remarks into account.

Dr. Michael Clark: Will my hon. Friend tell us how the number of scientific staff has increased during the lifetime of this Government? Is there any sign that the current salary levels have handicapped recruiting?

Mrs. Currie: I have no details for all the scientific staffs of all types employed by the National Health Service, but I can tell my hon. Friend that the number of qualified medical laboratory scientific staff, which is the subject of this question, is now 11,000. That is an increase of 34 per cent. since 1979. The salary scales range from just under £7,000 for the lowest basic grade to over £17,000.

Community Care

4. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of community care programmes undertaken by district health authorities.

Mr. Newton: Considerable progress has been made in implementing Government policies on community care, although the rate obviously varies from place to place.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister accept that there is much evidence that mentally handicapped people are simply being dumped on the community and are being given highly inadequate facilities and inadequate care? Will he give me an assurance that he will look sympathetically at village community schemes developed, for example, for Westwood hospital in my constituency rather than see hospitals close? Patients have been dumped on the community and the sites have been sold for private speculative development.

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the generalisation at the outset of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I certainly accept that some schemes have been better planned than others. Certainly the hon. Gentleman's suggestion about village schemes could be considered.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend confirm that it is not, and cannot be, Government policy that elderly or handicapped folk should just be sent home, and that it is essential to ensure that the necessary supportive welfare is in place before any old hospitals are closed?

Mr. Newton: Not only could it not and should it not be Government policy, but it is not Government policy. It is Government policy to ensure proper preparation of the sort that my hon. Friend rightly advocates.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that, for there to be a positive policy that facilities are available in the community, those facilities must include provisions such as domiciliary services for physiotherapy, speech therapy and so on? Does he accept that in practice that just does not happen in many areas, which means that the commitment to community care is a charade in those areas?

Mr. Newton: I agree that we would like to see a good deal more progress in various ways. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that we hope to make a further statement about primary care generally before too long. That statement will have some relevance to the points that he has raised.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Can my hon. Friend say when Sir Roy Griffiths is to report to the House on care in the community? Will he ensure that no psychiatric hospital or hospital for the mentally handicapped is closed before the report is published and the House has had a full opportunity to debate this critical issue?

Mr. Newton: We expect to receive Sir Roy's conclusions early in the new year. I do not think that I can give my hon. Friend the guarantee that he asked for in the latter part of his question. However, at our previous Question Time I gave him a guarantee that we would not agree to the closure of any hospital unless we were satisfied that proper alternative arrangements had been made.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that the assertions of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford,

South (Mr. Cryer) are supported by the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, in which Sir Gordon Downey commented most unfavourably on the Government's approach to community care and was particularly scathing about transitional funding arrangements? Does he accept that many hospitals are closing, not as a natural progression towards community care, but because they are in such a dreadful state of disrepair? Finally, whatever the hon. Gentleman says at the Dispatch Box today, does he agree that the Government's community care policies have been fatally and skilfully undermined by their approach to social security payments, which means that private homes are being subsidised to the hilt?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept either the last part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks or his suggestion that hospitals are being closed simply for reasons to do with buildings rather than patients. I readily accept that many areas of community care policy have been the subject of criticism. We accepted that those areas needed looking at, and that is precisely why we commissioned Sir Roy Griffith's work.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that sufferers of schizophrenia require not just community care on discharge, but a gradation of community care? Will he please take that into account before closing hospitals and institutions and when advising local district authorities on the sort of care that they must have in place?

Mr. Newton: The question of psychiatric patients is particularly complex, and undoubtedly a range of care in the community is needed. In my judgment, it is being planned or provided in many places.

Housing Benefit

5. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants of housing benefit will receive lower benefit in April 1988.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. (Mr. Michael Portillo): Most housing benefit recipients also get at least one other social security benefit. Our tables show that, taking the income-related benefits together, some 3·65 million people will receive less benefit than if the old schemes had continued. In cash terms the number of losers is less than 1 million.

Mr. Battle: What will the Minister be telling pensioners whose Christmas bonus, pensions and savings will be eroded by an increase in rents in April? Will he spell out that it is his Department that is reducing housing benefit, rather than live in the hope that local authorities will take the blame for the cut?

Mr. Portillo: I shall be telling pensioners that most of them will see a cash increase in housing benefit next April and that 70 per cent. of housing benefit losses will be under £2 a week.

Mr. Brazier: Will my hon. Friend confirm that one of the reasons why the Government were elected was to end the "Why work?" syndrome and that the present arrangements for housing benefit are grossly unfair for the working poor?

Mr. Portillo: The present arrangements have necessitated the very complicated housing benefit supplement, and that is lifted in the reforms. Altogether, the reforms will mean that more people will gain or experience no change than will lose.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister accept that many people will experience tremendous hardship in Northern Ireland? Will he acknowledge that while £2 a week would not be a great loss to hon. Members, it will certainly be a loss to people at the lower end of the income scale?

Mr. Portillo: The point that I want to make to the hon. Gentleman, and this applies as much to Northern Ireland as to Great Britain, is that as much money is going back into income-related benefits as is coming out of housing benefit. The figures balance each other out.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend accept that when we talk about Government money we are talking about taxpayers' money? Is it not right that a responsible Government should target help where it is most needed? That is what we are doing with the reform of the state welfare system.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The problem is to tell poor taxpayers with no savings that they should be making contributions to pay the housing benefit for people with more than £6,000 in the bank.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister admit that his changes in housing benefit will remove all entitlement to housing benefit from 1 million current claimants and that most of the remainder will lose some, if not most, of their benefit? What kind of targeting leaves behind 6·5 million caualties from 7 million claimants?

Mr. Portillo: I accept only the hon. Gentleman's point that 1 million people will lose housing benefit altogether. At the end of the reforms there will still be more people receiving housing benefit than there were under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. John Townend: What proportion of households will receive housing benefit after April 1988? Does my hon. Friend believe that that proportion will be too high?

Mr. Portillo: The proportion today is one third. That is made up of 7 million households, of which 1 million will lose eligibility to housing benefit, and therefore the future proportion will be somewhat under one third.

Redundancy Arrangements (NHS)

6. **Mrs. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards redundancy arrangements in the National Health Service in the light of the decision of the employment appeal tribunal in the case of Cato *v* Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's special health authority that the authority unlawfully discriminated against Mrs. Cato.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady will be aware of the statement made on 28 October by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment about the changes that the Government intend to make to statutory redundancy provisions, under which currently a woman cannot claim redundancy pay over the age of 60. The management side of the general Whitley council will shortly be reviewing present NHS redundancy arrangements.

Ms. Walley: I thank the Minister for her reply, and I am indeed aware of the announcement by the Secretary of State for Employment. Will the Minister tell us when the Whitley council arrangements will be announced? Does the Minister intend to back-date pay for women who have

been illegally discriminated against, as they are now entitled to redundancy payment following the signing of the treaty of Rome?

Mrs. Currie: The review that I mentioned will be conducted as quickly as possible. The hon. Lady is probably not aware that the current arrangements were introduced more than 20 years ago by a Labour Government headed by the present Lord Wilson. I have no intention of back-dating the changes to then.

Ms. Richardson: Is the Minister aware that her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, in spite of his statement, could have saved her and the DHSS some embarrassment if he had accepted a Labour amendment during the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 which would have prevented what is happening now? We should welcome the ending of discrimination in the National Health Service. Will the Minister make it her business—I know that she has the power to do so—to ensure that the Government extend the reform to the private sector as well?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady should be aware that the Government are steadily removing the discriminatory rules against women that were introduced by previous Labour Governments. We have done better for disabled housewives and for married women caring for the sick. I am not in the least embarrassed. I am pleased with the progress that is being made.

Family Income Supplement

7. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families currently in receipt of family income supplement will receive an increase in benefit following the introduction of family credit.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Almost all families in receipt of family income supplement are expected to receive a cash increase when family credit is introduced.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that these impressive figures are a vindication of the policy of concentrating resources on low-income families, rather than spreading them thinly through increases in child benefit, which benefit the better off most of all? Will he tell the House how many families will receive an increase of more than £5 a week when family credit is introduced?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend's comments. We shall be spending over £300 million extra on low-income families as we move to the new system of benefits, when 240,000 families will benefit by more than £5 a week.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that this important benefit, which was first introduced by my noble Friend Lord Joseph, does much to remove families from the indignity of being better off out of work than they are in it? Does he agree that the particularly important modifications that he has introduced give greater recognition to the needs of teenage children, which is a matter on which the poverty lobby has campaigned for a long time?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that the benefit is a major improvement and will be of particular help in the sectors that my hon. Friend has identified. We want it to be available to as many people as possible after the changeover.

AIDS

8. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have been born suffering from AIDS in the last three years.

Mr. Newton: We have had no reports of any babies diagnosed with AIDS at birth. Since the beginning of 1985 there have been reports of 63 children born in the United Kingdom with antibodies to the human immunodeficiency virus. All were born to mothers who were either infected with HIV or at high risk of infection. We do not know in how many of those children the HIV antibodies will persist. There may also have been other babies with HIV who have not been tested and reported.

Miss Lestor: Is the Minister aware that the report of the Select Committee on Social Services goes into some detail about the fact that we do not yet know how AIDS is transmitted to babies, whether it be after birth or during pregnancy? The report makes many recommendations on how money should be spent and research carried out to discover the extent of the problem. When will the hon. Gentleman respond to the recommendations in the report?

Mr. Newton: We hope to respond to the Select Committee's recommendations quite shortly. I shall have in mind the points that the hon. Lady has made.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that, grievous though the problem of the number of children born suffering from AIDS is, the problem of children born with heart defects is much more serious, as is highlighted by——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about AIDS.

9. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the provisions he has made to ensure that social services departments who care for people with AIDS and their carers are properly equipped to fulfil this duty.

Mr. Newton: Social services departments have an important role to play in supporting people with AIDS. An additional £5 million was included in the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88 in recognition of the extra work for local authorities arising from the increase in drug misuse and AIDS. We are currently considering what extra help will be needed next year, particularly for the local authorities with the greatest case loads.

Mr. Rowe: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but will he assure me on two points? First, is the money that was put aside reaching the social services departments? It often tends to get sidetracked. Secondly, social services departments that have so far not had large case loads of AIDS seem to be in danger of reinventing the wheel. Will he ensure that departments that have had a lot of experience are able to share it with those that do not?

Mr. Newton: I must tell my hon. Friend that, as he is already aware, unless the Government attempt to dictate each and every aspect of local authority expenditure, the amount that is spent on social services depends on the decisions of local authorities. On the latter point, I am hopeful that the reports and co-ordination between different kinds of authorities that are entailed in the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 will contribute to his aim.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are more cases of AIDS in north-west London,

because of the hospital facilities and other facilities there to cope with them? Will he ensure that local authorities and health authorities have the resources that they need to cope with the problem, without penalising other vital services?

Mr. Newton: Of course, North-West Thames has about half the current AIDS cases in England. We have been making extra allocations to it accordingly. There will be further allocations to North-West Thames next year, which I hope to announce shortly. I have also had talks with some local authorities in the relevant parts of London in the hope of finding some way of making appropriate help available to them.

Occupational Pension Schemes

11. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are in occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Scott: In 1983, which is the year covered by the Government Actuary's most recent survey, 11·1 million employees were members of occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Bellingham: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he agree that, in spite of what Opposition Members say, the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986 will be welcomed by millions of people? Does he agree also that such provisions will give them greater independence and will amount to a social revolution that is on a par with the revolution that was caused by the sale of council houses in the first two Parliaments?

Mr. Scott: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. For some years the number of people in occupational pension schemes has remained stubbornly at about 50 per cent. The Act will widen flexibility, opportunity and choice in the provision of pensions.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Does the Minister accept that occupational pension beneficiaries are becoming angry at the amount of abatement in their occupational pensions when they have to retire early? It means that their pension approaches unemployment benefit rates. Many occupational pensioners have to retire early. Will the Minister examine the matter and give occupational pensioners much more generous treatment?

Mr. Scott: Unemployment pay is designed to insulate people against unexpected unemployment. It is not designed to top up occupational pension schemes. The Government were right to move in the direction in which they did.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the rapid development of occupational pension schemes is a most attractive feature of modern society, but they should go hand in hand with the future development of state retirement and old-age pension systems and not be a replacement therefor?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that the state retirement pension should be a basic provision. The more that people can look to the provision that they are able to make, either through personal or occupational pension schemes, the better they will be able to enjoy their retirement.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister recognise that if people do as the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said and welcome the passage of the 1986 Act, it can only be because they have not read what the Secretary of State has said about the way in which people who took out personal pensions will assume full responsibility for success or catastrophe in their pension arrangements? Does he further accept that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) said, the way in which the Government are continually eroding the rights of those with occupational pensions is particularly pointed? Does he acknowledge that, in effect, with the Social Security Act 1986, the Government are saying that the age of 55 is the age of retirement, but at one's own expense?

Mr. Scott: On the first point, the Financial Services Act 1986, when it comes into operation, will provide proper consumer protection for those who take out personal pensions. There will be an early opportunity in Committee to discuss the interaction between unemployment benefit and occupational pensions. We shall see who wins the argument.

North West Region

12. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the increases in the National Health Service budget announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for 1988-89 and 1989-90 in the Autumn Statement he intends to grant to the north-west region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Health authority allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly. Allocations for 1989-90 will be announced towards the end of next year. The North West regional health authority this year has taken 9·1 per cent. of the total allocated budget.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her response. On behalf of the people of the north-west, I give hearty thanks to her. On Friday the new children's ward at Wrightington hospital was opened for extremely sick children. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the second biggest allocation in the country is going to the north-west and that nine hospitals are under construction at the moment? Will she confirm that the 22 hospital projects that are planned for the next few years will be secure and that the people of the north-west can look forward to their new hospitals?

Mrs. Currie: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He knows that I took a personal interest in the children at Wrightington hospital. I am pleased to hear about the progress being made. My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the capital scheme. The sum of £73·4 million has been allocated to the north-west region this year. It is the second largest capital allocation in the country. It compares with £38 million in 1978 under the Labour Government, of which various Opposition Members were members. Of the nine schemes under construction, there are major schemes in Oldham, Tameside and the Manchester royal infirmary, for which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary laid the foundation stone last year. I shall take my hon. Friend's other remarks into account.

Mr. McCartney: Some time ago I wrote to the Minister about the cuts in budget in the Wigan health authority area, where the cervical cytology scheme is £30,000 short. She refused to meet me and other hon. Members on this

question. Will she reconsider the matter, as the health authority is now doing what the Government asked it to do in relation to the scheme?

Mrs. Currie: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman is interested in cervical cytology. The Government are determined to cut the death toll from this appalling cancer affecting women. I am satisfied that all our health authorities will have the appropriate computerised call and recall systems in place by next year.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: In making allocations to the north-west, will my hon. Friend take into account the fact that places such as Lancaster have substantial aging populations? While we are very happy to take responsibility for this natural phenomenon, matters are complicated by the enormous influx of people from places such as Blackburn. That puts a very considerable strain on our resources. Will my hon. Friend take that into account in her allocations?

Mrs. Currie: I am glad to report to the House that in the Lancaster health authority area we do, indeed, take into account the pattern of demography. From 1982 until now patient activity has increased on all fronts. In-patient cases treated are up by 12·5 per cent., out-patient attendances have increased by 12·3 per cent. and a major redevelopment of the Royal Lancaster infirmary, costing nearly £16 million, is due to start shortly. My hon. Friend's remarks point to the reasons why we are giving extra money to Blackburn and the other health authorities in the north-west region.

Care in the Community

13. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the question of care in the community in the last month.

Mrs. Currie: We continue to receive a considerable number of representations. Those received last month included the letter of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) of 6 October, to which I replied yesterday.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not outrageous that Kent county council has ignored allegations made by Yorkshire Television about community care in Kent and the treatment of the elderly and mentally handicapped? Is it not significant that the Conservative-controlled Kent county council discussed those allegations behind closed doors and that it has taken no action at all, despite repeated representations by Labour councillors about the fact that criminal elements own homes in Kent and are licensed by the local authority? Will the Minister intervene now, or do we have to see heartless Thatcherism at its very worst persist?

Mrs. Currie: I am disappointed that the hon. Member is not in the least interested in the excellent developments in this field in Workington. He has asked me about Kent. He should be aware that Kent county council has not only taken immediate action, but had taken action before the television company got round to making its programme. The council is fulfilling its statutory obligations in the way that we would expect of it.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend aware that Kent has one of the most innovative community care and residential care programmes in the country and that, as she hinted, a great many of the defects to which the programme drew attention had already been rectified before the programme went out?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is quite right to be very angry at the stupid remarks made by the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that the financing of community care is hopelessly muddled between hospitals, local authorities and her Department? Until that is clarified and far more money is provided for community care, it will remain more of a slogan than a reality.

Mrs. Currie: The right hon. Gentleman will remember that I was a member of the Select Committee which reported on community care a little while ago. That Committee said very much the same sort of thing. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last year asked Sir Roy Griffiths to report to us on the pattern of financing and how it might assist us to promote further that important policy.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Has my hon. Friend received representations directly on the worrying number of cases of individuals with mental illness or mental handicap, particularly those with behavioural problems, who are being passed to and fro between the social services and local authorities, very much to their disadvantage? The buck is being passed to and fro. Has my hon. Friend received those representations herself?

Mrs. Currie: The appropriate care and treatment of mentally ill people, particularly those who are voluntary patients, is extremely difficult. I am aware that the number of mental illness units in the Health Service in general hospitals has increased and the number of in-patients has decreased, which has enabled our staff to look after them much better.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that the onus for care is now falling on voluntary bodies and that those bodies have no budgets to deal with it? The carers association in Southport receives a grant of only £50.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman can make the appropriate representations to the authorities in Southport on that.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind the problems faced by the families of those who are mentally ill, even in areas such as Norfolk, where the community care programme is going quite well, does my hon. Friend agree that attention needs to be paid to the rate of closure of the larger mental hospitals, as outlined by the Select Committee, which was referred to a moment ago, and by the early-day motions on the Order Paper at present?

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I share my hon. Friend's concerns. The care in the community initiative is neither a cheap option nor an exercise to achieve indiscriminate hospital closures. We look to Sir Roy Griffiths to advise us shortly on how we may proceed.

Health Authorities (Budgets)

14. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning actions taken by health authorities to balance their 1987-88 revenue budgets.

Mr. Newton: Representations have been received from a number of right hon. and hon. Members including the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

Mr. Pike: What does the Minister intend to do to enable health authorities to meet the demands of the community and avoid making cuts in patient care, as they are being forced to do throughout the country? For example, in Burnley there is the closure of the Victoria hospital, which the local authority claims is a temporary closure, but it will be permanent, thus avoiding the consultation procedure.

Mr. Newton: I am somewhat surprised at the hon. Gentleman raising that point. He knows that the background to the proposals concerning the Victoria hospital in Burnley is the recent opening of a major extension costing £6 million providing the facilities at the Burnley general hospital.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that a regional audit team was recently put into my district health authority, where there is currently a shortfall of some £200,000, which will rise to a shortfall of £500,000 by the end of the year? Is my hon. Friend aware that cost-cutting reductions are being asked for across the entire northern region, but that there are other district health authorities within the northern region which are not being asked to make the same reductions? Will he join me in pressing the regional health authority to put the audit team into every other district health authority so that proper cost-cutting reductions can be made everywhere?

Mr. Newton: What I will continue to do, and have done on previous occasions, is to encourage regional health authorities to work together with district health authorities to tackle some of the problems. In my view the use of audit teams to look at the scope for savings and to contribute to the maintenance of services is a sensible part of those arrangements.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that the real cuts that have taken place in health authority budgets have led in recent days to repeated cancellations of heart operations for babies as young as 11 weeks old in Coventry? Is he further aware that we learnt just over an hour ago that the parents of six-week-old David Barber, constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), were refused permission in the High Court for an injunction to compel the Birmingham health authority immediately to carry out a life-saving operation on that baby? If there are any deaths because of cancelled heart operations, the Minister, his team and the Prime Minister will not be able to pass them off as accidents—it will be murder.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the principal problem in these cases has been a shortage of intensive care nurses. I understand from the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority, to whom I spoke this morning, that there has been some improvement in the staffing position, as a result of the return of some staff from illness, and that all the intensive care beds there are now open. I am hopeful that this will help, although I recognise that the clinicians must decide the order in which patients are treated, according to the urgency of their case.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Dr. Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the decision taken yesterday by the North East Thames regional health authority to build a new cancer treatment unit at Harold Wood on the eastern outskirts of London and to close the cancer treatment unit in Southend, which will mean a very long journey for my constituents and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the area? Will she prevail upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to review this decision, to spend some of the money at Southend and to keep open this cost-effective unit, which gives dedicated care to thousands of cancer sufferers every year?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the decision of that regional health authority. As my hon. Friend knows, the matter will now come to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who will look carefully at the authority's proposals, and his prime concern will be to ensure the best interests of the patients. My right hon. Friend will take into account the Department's own review of the basis on which radiotherapy services are provided.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us precisely what is the justification for making nurses in residential homes liable for the whole of the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: Nurses in residential homes will have the same treatment on community charges as other people. Of course, if their incomes are low, they will be able to get up to 80 per cent. rebate on the community charge.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister making a new announcement that low wages, such as those of nurses, will be enough to qualify people for the full 80 per cent. reduction in poll tax liability?

The Prime Minister: No. What I am saying—as the right hon. Gentleman is aware—is that student nurses receive more than those at universities who receive student grants. That is the reason for the difference. I note that the right hon. Gentleman tries to masquerade as being on the side of the nurses—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition can hardly claim to be the nurses' friend. They cut nurses' pay in real terms for three years running, and in 1976-77 by 10 per cent. In the five pay years between 1974-75 and 1978-79 they cut nurses' pay in real terms in four of those years. Under this Government the pay of nurses has gone up by 30 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister is concerned now about the economic position of nurses, will she instruct the Secretary of State for Social Services not to withdraw the special night-time and weekend payments from nurses, and will she instruct the Secretary of State for the Environment not to impose the poll tax obligation on people who currently have little or no rates obligation?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. The proposals go to the review body for nurses' pay, which was granted by this Government and which nurses did not have under previous Governments. It is necessary to consider the pay of nurses structurally. One thing which arose on a question to which I heard the answer given a moment ago is that nurses who serve geriatric patients are given higher pay than those who serve in paediatric units. That is causing problems. Yes, the pay needs to be looked at structurally, and the review body is the right body to do it.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: In view of the repugnance felt in all parts of the House about the horrific atrocities committed by the IRA, will my right hon. Friend seek a meeting with the Leader of the Opposition on Privy Councillor terms in order to ensure that the Opposition withdraw all support from the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order for the Prime Minister to answer the question whether she will have a meeting.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I will not seek a meeting with the Leader of the Opposition. I think that most of us believe that no one in this House should have contacts with the IRA or Sinn Fein.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: Will the Prime Minister tell the House why she is so opposed to the televising of proceedings in the House of Commons?

The Prime Minister: Suppose we wait until the debate. I do not think that televising the House would enhance its reputation.

New Zealand

Q3. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to seek to pay an official visit to New Zealand.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to visit New Zealand.

Mr. Butler: Will my right hon. Friend perhaps reconsider her decision? The New Zealand Government are Socialist, but they are at least following my right hon. Friend's economic policies and cutting higher taxation as well.

The Prime Minister: I note what my hon. Friend says. I know that New Zealand is following Thatcherite economic policies in removing exchange controls, selling shares in a number of Government-owned enterprises and reducing the burden of taxation and Government expenditure as a proportion of output. I agree with those policies. It only goes to show that the Labour party is out of step, not only with the mood of the country as a whole, but with its brothers abroad.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Prime Minister take a lesson from the Government of New Zealand and learn that it is possible for a Western democracy to have a foreign policy which is not one of total subservience to the United States?

The Prime Minister: I believe that if a country relies on another country to help with its defence it should give that country's ships refuge in its harbours.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend recall that last month she received a telegram from the newly formed Moscow branch of the International Society for Human Rights, the release of whose leaders, Alexander Ognorodnikov and Vallry Sendlrov, many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House campaigned for in recent years, and who are now resuming monitoring of the Helsinki Final Act? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the existence of such groups without discrimination, harassment and persecution will be the shrewd test of glasnost and the end of the Stalin terror?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I recall that telegram. I agree with my hon. Friend that the right of such groups to operate freely, which was guaranteed by the Helsinki accords, will be one of the tests of openness and democracy in the Soviet Union. But it is encouraging that two of the founders of the group, whom my hon. Friend mentioned, both with a long record of human campaigning, were released from prison earlier this year.

Mr. Wallace: The Prime Minister will be well aware that in the run-up to the Ministers' conference on pollution in the North sea there has been much criticism from nations traditionally friendly towards us, not only of the extent to which Britain is responsible for pollution of the sea, but of the degree to which we have been feet-dragging in coming to agreements to do something about it. Is the Prime Minister concerned about Britain being known as a bad neighbour? If so, what initiatives will Britain be taking this week to clean up the North sea and this country's image?

The Prime Minister: We are delighted to be hosting the second international conference on the protection of the North sea. The United Kingdom is committed to a clean North sea, and is therefore ready to play its part. The majority of pollution input to the North sea is via rivers, and with £200 million of expenditure on improvement, I am pleased to say that the Thames is just about the cleanest metropolitan river in Europe.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend consider the claims that Vanessa Redgrave and two other members of the CND funded the operation to spring George Blake from Wormwood Scrubs? Bearing in mind that at a recent press conference Miss Redgrave appeared to admit to that serious crime, should not Miss Redgrave, Mr. Pottle and Mr. Randle be charged?

The Prime Minister: As the House knows, charging people for a crime is not a matter for me but for the prosecuting authorities.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House how she equates her view that there should be no negotiations with the IRA with her membership of a

previous Conservative Government in which Lord Whitelaw actually met and negotiated with the IRA? Can she assure us that there have been no further contacts between the IRA and members of her intelligence services, MI5 and MI6, during the last eight years?

The Prime Minister: Ever since 1979 the policy of the Government has been that we have no contact at ministerial level with the IRA or with other terrorist organisations. They are working fundamentally against the citizens of this country, fundamentally against democracy and against all innocent people in this country and in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if criminals carry weapons and firearms and are prepared to use them, they must expect to meet that sort of force exercised on behalf of our society?

The Prime Minister: If there were not terrorism it would be easier to tackle these matters, but the police and the security forces who operate on our behalf must have full means for proper self-defence.

Q5. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: In the light of the previous exchange between the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and the Minister for Health about open-heart surgery, will the Prime Minister ensure that the Government take action today on the case of David Barber, who has had his operation put off five times? Will she ensure that immediate action is taken so that the operation takes place and his life is saved, or is her only intention to attend the funeral?

The Prime Minister: I heard my hon. Friend say from the Dispatch Box that the unit of the Birmingham hospital is today back to full strength. It is hoped that the operation will now take place as soon as possible. My hon. Friend also explained that previously there was a shortage of peadiatric nurses — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I have indicated, in answer to a previous question, that that was one reason why we need to look at the pay of nurses structurally, to see that such shortages are remedied.

Mr. Barry Field: As the Prime Minister's responsibilities include the security of the nation, will my right hon. Friend consider whether the advice of Arthur Scargill that members of the Communist party should be able openly to join the Labour party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not within the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Q6. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: As a mother, would the Prime Minister be happy with a Government who create conditions in which a small baby has to apply for a life-saving heart operation six times, but has still not yet had it?

The Prime Minister: As I have stated earlier, there have been enormous increases in expenditure on the Health Service. Birmingham was short of paediatric nurses, but we are trying to deal with that problem by looking at the pay of nurses on the basis of the areas in which we need more nurses. I understand that the unit is now back to full strength and that it is hoped that the operation will take place soon.

Q7. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alexander: Has my right hon. Friend had time to consider the current proposal of the EEC that British summer time should end in September instead of October? Bearing in mind that most people object to its ending in October, will my right hon. Friend tell her colleagues in the EEC when she next meets them that it is yet another of their daft proposals and that we do not want anything to do with it?

The Prime Minister: I understand that a draft directive has now been proposed that extends the existing arrangements for a further year. It would have the effect of maintaining the status quo in all countries until the end of 1989, so that we shall have time to consider whether it is advisable that we take on a similar date to Europe.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): As the House knows, British Rail Engineering Ltd. is one of the main suppliers of railway rolling stock to British Rail. It is also a wholly owned subsidiary of BR.

BREL has been extensively reorganised in the past few years. These changes have stemmed largely from the modernisation of BR's locomotive and rolling stock fleets, which has reduced substantially the need for repairs. BREL now consists of four main works—Crewe, York and two at Derby—and concentrates on manufacture and heavy overhaul.

The Railways board has now completed its review of options for the future of BREL. Sir Robert Reid has recommended to me that BREL should be offered for sale as soon as possible. I have now given my approval to this. I share the board's view that selling BREL will be in the best interests of the railway and of the BREL work force.

The board plans to invite offers for all four main works together as a single business. The aim is to be ready to invite offers by next spring, and to complete the sale as soon as possible after that. The Railways board and its merchant bank advisers will be in the lead in developing plans for the sale. My approval will be needed for the eventual sale.

The board proposes making separate arrangements for the sale of the BREL foundry at Horwich. The aim would be to find a buyer to take it over as a going concern, probably some time next year.

Great strides have been made by the BREL management and work force towards commercial viability and competitive levels of productivity, but I believe that the business can best develop and flourish in the private sector. There it will also have much greater freedom to diversify and compete for work outside the railway supply industry and, I hope, to create new employment opportunities.

Privatising BREL will be good for the railway, good for the railway supply industry, and good for BREL itself. I hope, therefore, that the House will welcome it.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State's statement confirms the cynical manipulation and betrayal of the work force at BREL. Does he not remember that under his Government the work force will have fallen from 35,000 to 7,500 by April next year? Is it not also the case that BREL's sales will have fallen from £668 million in 1979 to £430 million, again by April next year?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the Government claimed that they would not implement the Serpell report? Is he aware that this is the eighth time that BREL's work force has been deceived? Will he accept that the only people who have paid the price for this rationalisation have been the 25,000 people who lost their jobs in a vain attempt to secure the jobs of their workmates who remained?

Can the Secretary of State guarantee that privatisation will provide a secure future for the work force? What are the arrangements for pension rights — will they be affected by privatisation? Does he accept that the Government's and the management's response to the self-sacrifice of the work force has been contemptible? Is he aware that BR's management has ignored investment and, instead, has invested in redundancy cheques to the tune of £127 million? Does he accept that he is ultimately responsible for the framework that has encouraged the betrayal of the BREL work force? Does he not understand that, by putting his party's squalid obsession with competitive tendering before investment, he has chosen to put at risk the life of an industry?

Mr. Channon: I entirely disagree with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and especially with his last remarks. He said that we have not invested in BR, but I recall the enormous investment programme in BR worth some £3 billion of which approximately £1 billion will be in rolling stock and locomotives and for which BREL has an excellent opportunity to bid.

I am in no way cynically manipulating the work force of BREL. What I am trying to do—I genuinely believe this to be the case—is to offer BREL the possibility of a secure future. No one can guarantee for ever more the size of any particular industry. However, I am convinced that privatisation will offer BREL a much better chance in the future than it has had in the past.

As regards the fall in sales, I have a list before me of BR contracts currently placed with BREL and they total much more than £300 million. Since BR began to place new-build orders competitively, BREL has obtained about 70 per cent. of those orders. Thus, far from manipulating or deceiving the work force, my announcement today is an opportunity for that work force to have a better future than it had in the past.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a matter of concern is BR's tendering policy and the fact that BREL is currently unable to tender for work where a penalty clause is included in the contract because, in effect, BR would be penalising itself? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that such a problem will disappear on privatisation? That will leave BREL well able to improve on its 70 per cent. success rate. Therefore, does he agree that anyone who is really concerned about the long-term future of BREL will warmly support his statement?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. I am aware of the case to which he has referred about the new diesel locomotives and the question of having a contractor who can take full responsibility for the design components and for any subsequent failures. Indeed, that matter was raised in the House in the recent transport debate. As my hon. Friend pointed out, any problem that may exist will be removed if privatisation goes through.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Does the Secretary of State recall that about a week ago, in a debate in this House, my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—unfortunately, she cannot be here today — drew his attention to the pattern of previous privatisations, which is major investment followed by massive redundancies and the rundown of order books? My hon. Friend asked whether that was a prelude to the privatisation of BREL. Plainly it was. Can the right hon. Gentleman add to his statement by telling the House and the BREL work force how much he expects his friends in the City to make from this privatisation?

What safeguards is he offering against foreign ownership since the safeguards offered in the case of Rolls-Royce —also in my constituency—patently failed?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I am aware of the speech of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)—I was present when she made it. I disagreed with a great deal of what she said.

I am trying, if it can be arranged, to get a secure future for BREL. No one can ever give a guarantee about that. However, I am convinced—as is BR and, I understand, the management of BREL — that BREL will have a much better future in the private sector. That is why I am pressing ahead with the proposals for the privatisation of BREL. I should have thought that the constituents of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would welcome my statement. I believe that she will find that she has done them a disservice by her attitude.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but will he give an assurance that, before and after the sale of BREL, there will be no inhibition on that operation bidding for opportunities in either the Channel tunnel or the London Underground equipment programme? Will he also give an assurance that, when BREL is sold, there will be no inhibitions on the purchasers bidding for British Rail equipment?

Mr. Channon: I can give my hon. Friend assurances on both those points. I am very glad that he has drawn attention to the opportunities available in connection with the Channel tunnel and London Underground. They are in addition to the already very large sums that I quoted to the House a few moments ago about British Rail investment.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Does the Secretary of State accept that the real test of his proposals will be whether they produce a viable, competitive industry, with good job opportunities? Will he tell us whether he has any proposals for a management-staff buy-out, and can he reassure us that money from the sale will be reinvested in British Rail?

Mr. Channon: I agree with what the hon. Lady has said. The intention of the proposals in my statement is to create a viable and competitive industry, and it is because I am convinced that this is the best way forward that I have reached my decision, in consultation with British Rail.

As for the question of a management buy-out, I understand that the executive directors hope to proceed with a bid that will include employee participation. If that succeeded, it would no doubt be welcomed by the House. However, I cannot express views on its merits as opposed to those of other bids until I see what the other bids are. Certainly it is a possible opportunity.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the real betrayal of BREL occurred during the period when it was allowed to become a cosy, uncompetitive, tied supplier to British Rail? Does he further agree that competitive tendering must be in the best interests of British Rail and its passengers and that, in any competitive tender, BREL must have as good an opportunity as any other company to be allowed to supply equipment to British Rail?

Mr. Channon: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. Competitive tendering must be good for British Rail, for the traveller and for the taxpayer and BREL must have the opportunity to compete fairly.

It is interesting to note that, since British Rail began placing new-build orders competitively, BREL has obtained about 70 per cent. of them. It has several overseas contracts at present, and hopes to secure substantial work in the future—on, for instance, Channel tunnel rolling stock. All those opportunities will be better in the private sector.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked about foreign buyers. May we press the Secretary of State on that? Surely there is a feasible possibility—it is not an Aunt Sally—of a foreign buyer buying a workshop and getting hold of the whole new order book. After a certain period, it is not nightmarish to suggest that that order book might be transferred back to a factory abroad. What protection is there against a foreign takeover, over a period, of these valuable British assets?

Mr. Channon: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. At present, I see no reason to exclude overseas bids; indeed, there are strong commercial arguments for allowing them. It is important that we should see what is the best price available for public assets, and that railway supply is an international market.

I want to ensure competition and a source of suppliers. The railway supply industry is strongly competitive, and I can see no reason for its not remaining so. All the issues can be taken into account in assessing offers, and, if there was ever any question of a monopoly being created, that would be a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the BREL foundry in my constituency in Horwich is one of the most efficient and best capitalised in Britain? There is a great and diverse market opportunity for its products. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that opportunity can be better realised in the private sector?

Mr. Channon: Yes; my hon Friend is right. Horwich is a specialist foundry facility outside the mainstream business of rolling stock manufacture and heavy overhaul. BR and its advisers think that Horwich's future would be best served if it was marketed separately. I think that that is a good decision, and I hope that all will go well.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Surely the words of Labour Members are coming home to roost. It was put to the Minister that the redundancies in and the closures of workshops, such as happened at Springburn, were all about getting a neat little package so that the Government could sell them off. Within weeks of the announcement of the proposed closure at Springburn, an American business man telephoned me and BREL directors promising hundreds of jobs in the Springburn area. BREL officials were convinced that he was only interested in the hundreds of acres of land that are now lying derelict in the inner city of Glasgow. What assurances will the Minister give that those who buy BREL will be more interested in providing jobs than in getting the land?

The Minister has not mentioned BREL Springburn, a maintenance company. What will be its future?

Mr. Channon: Springburn is not part of my announcement today because of the earlier decisions to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I understand his concern about that, but he knows what was announced about that some months ago. I am trying to create a viable industry with a secure future. I have had some experience of that in other industries in the past—*[Interruption.]*—and it has worked, despite the scoffing of Labour Members.

All the factors that the hon. Gentleman mentions clearly will be relevant when we decide what offer, if any, to accept for the sale of BREL. If the management buy-out is successful, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's suggestions will be totally ill-founded, and I am sure that that will be true of any sale which the Government eventually approve. We are trying to create a viable industry with a secure and better future for the work force. Frankly, Labour Members do the work force no service by raising such issues when there is an opportunity to provide it with a much better future.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is it not a characteristic of nationalised industries that they make thousands upon thousands of their workers redundant, as has happened at Shildon, including several hundreds of my constituents? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, had this announcement been made 10 or 15 years ago and BREL had been allowed to diversify and compete on equal terms, it is at least possible that the Shildon wagon works would be operating today?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend may well be right, but the important point that the House should understand is that great strides have been made by the management and work force towards greater efficiency.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The right hon. Gentleman does not care.

Mr. Channon: I care for the future of the industry and for those working in it. The hon. Gentleman and others who make such points are the ones who are threatening the long-term future, not me. The changes that have taken place in BREL were the inevitable result of modernisation. BREL will have a much greater freedom to diversify and compete for work outside the railway supply industry, which I am convinced will be good for BREL and its work force.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): May I assure the Minister that the engineering workers who are deeply involved in these enterprises firmly believe that the Government have colluded with British Rail in sabotaging their future and their opportunities by prohibiting them from tendering for work? Since the workers have the biggest investment in the industry what consultation will take place with them, what assistance will be given to them and why is it that the Minister can suddenly say today that the Government will help them to tender for contracts when for months and years they have been precluded from so doing?

Mr. Channon: I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can say that, when I have read out to the House a whole list of contracts that BREL has won in the past few years. As I have already said, BREL has obtained about 70 per cent. of new-build orders since the competitive tendering system started, so what the hon. Gentleman has said clearly is nonsense.

As for the allegation about some collusion with British Rail to destroy BREL—or words to that effect—I cannot imagine what conceivable motive British Rail or the Government would have for such a course of action. We are trying to create a secure future for the industry, with more jobs for the work force, more opportunities for diversification and more orders to be won in British Rail, the Channel tunnel, the Underground and in other areas outside the industry. I am amazed at the blinkered, out-of-date, doctrinaire attitude of Opposition Members.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that today's announcement comes too late to save the Swindon railway works, which could have followed in the footsteps of Jaguar and other industries that have been let loose in the private sector and become infinitely more successful as a result? Is he further aware that former employees of British Rail Engineering Ltd. in Swindon have now found themselves jobs in the highly successful private-sector industries in Swindon and are now earning more money in better circumstances than they were before?

Does my right hon. Friend also recognise that the great days of the railway were in the times of the Great Western Railway, which was a private company? Has he ruled out the possibility of giving BREL workers a chance to buy a share in the equity in the new company that is to be created?

Mr. Channon: On my hon. Friend's last point, as I said earlier, one possibility is that of the executive directors proceeding with a bid that would include employee participation. I hope that that answers my hon. Friend's point.

Yes, I know the position in Swindon. As my hon. Friend knows, I was in Swindon with him last Friday, so I well know what is happening there. He has shown what can happen in certain parts of the country as a result of what has gone on in the past. In the four areas that are left—York, Crewe, Derby and Horwich—I am trying to secure better opportunities for people, and I think that I shall do so.

Mr. Cryer: As BREL has been in the forefront of railway technology, with the introduction and development of high-speed trains that are sold not only here but throughout the world, why is the Secretary of State giving the workers who developed and built those trains a kick in the teeth by placing all their jobs in jeopardy? As he is so mesmerised by private sector ownership, does he think that the new private-sector owners of BREL will be more or less competent than Townsend Thoresen?

Mr. Channon: I am not giving the workers a kick in the teeth; I am giving them an opportunity that they have not had in the past. Many of them will welcome that and realise that their best chance in the future is to be in the private sector and to enjoy the advantages of diversification and all the other things that I have announced which will help them. So far from the announcement placing their jobs in jeopardy, I have no reason to assume that it places anyone's job in jeopardy. I can give no guarantee—nor could any Minister—but I hope that my announcement will provide more security and opportunities for jobs.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): If, as I hope, my right hon. Friend receives a viable proposal for a management—

employee buy-out, will he give us an assurance that he will give it especially favourable consideration even if it is not the highest cash offer that he receives?

Mr. Channon: I shall give it careful consideration and examine all the relevant factors — including what my hon. Friend has said.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): If the Secretary of State is not giving the workers a kick in the teeth, and if, as he says, he thinks that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would welcome his announcement, why does he not ask them and find out what they really think? I am sure he would discover that the overwhelming majority of opinion was that this was a large-scale betrayal, a confidence trick and a policy that has been agreed on by the Government for political purposes. The result is an announcement today that creates even more redundancies. In all likelihood, of the 35,000 workers that it once had, only 7,500 will remain in the industry.

Does the Secretary of State realise that he is announcing the death of a once great and powerful British industry? My simple question is, what guarantee can he give that there will be 7,500 jobs in the industry in a year's time?

Mr. Channon: Far from announcing the death of the industry, I am announcing new opportunities for it to expand. I am not announcing redundancies. I am offering the workers in Derby, Crewe and York a new future in a private industry and opportunities that they have not had in the past and that the Opposition would seek to deny them.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his announcement will lead to independence for British Rail Engineering Ltd., and will release it from management by British Rail? That will present new opportunities. Does he acknowledge that it would be more in line with Government policy and Government thinking for an offer from the workers and the management to be more seriously considered than a straightforward buy-out offer by any other company? Will my right hon. Friend give us that assurance?

Mr. Channon: I shall look carefully at any offer by the management and the workers. I understand the views of my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Erewash (Mr. Rost). I also understand the general views of the House about management buy-outs. My record shows that on many occasions in the past I have given opportunities for management buy-outs. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West is quite right about the future of the company. This announcement offers BREL and its management and work force independence and more opportunities. It does not offer them fewer opportunities, a dreary future with more redundancies or a future of decline. We are giving the company opportunities for the future and the Opposition, by their blinkered, doctrinaire, out-of-date views, are trying to deny it those opportunities.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that when he said that this privatisation was in the best interests of the work force his nose grew by half an inch? It is certainly not in the best interests of the thousands who were sacrificed in Swindon, Glasgow, Derby and Crewe to enable the Minister to get to the position that he is in today. If he wants to pray in aid Jaguar and Rolls-Royce—and he will not do that for more than three or four months, given the way that the order books of those companies are going—why does he not remind the House of what happened, in his earlier incarnation, to Self-Changing Gears, the company that makes the gearboxes for British Rail trains? Immediately on privatisation it sacked 20 per cent. of its work force in Coventry. Five years ago Coventry Climax had 3,000 employees, but as a result of privatisation the company was reduced to nowt.

I ask the Minister for the final time: when it comes to privatisation, will he monitor the promises that he makes to the House to make sure that they are kept? Our experience in Coventry is that his promises are never kept.

Mr. Channon: On many enjoyable occasions in my previous job I debated privatisation with the hon. Gentleman. We agreed to disagree. He gives a few examples of failure in the motor industry and elsewhere, but I could give many more examples of successful companies, some of which employ more people, are more profitable and have much more secure futures. As I have said, we are offering BREL a better future. That is my genuine belief, and this announcement will be widely welcomed when it is fully understood.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that, based upon the statements already made in Parliament, it is apparent that the Government have a hatred for workers, especially those that are organised in trade unions? In view of the fiasco of the BP sale, will he give a guarantee that the Chancellor or some other Minister will not underwrite the underwriters? If he cannot get bidders in Britain, will he give a guarantee that the Kuwaitis will not be in with the first 10 per cent.?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman may not have heard my statement. I said that we would have a trade sale and not a flotation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Was the tender price submitted by BREL for the 158 Sprinter in any way influenced by the knowledge that that company may have had that it was to be privatised?

Mr. Channon: No.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Secretary of State confirm that BREL has successfully competed for work outside the railway industry? If the reorganisation of BREL and its recent success in tendering have been so good, why is the Secretary of State privatising it, other than for reasons of pure dogma and trying to make sure that once it is profitable his friends can get their snouts in the gravy trough?

Mr. Channon: As I have tried to explain to the House, it will give BREL the opportunity to diversify into other industries apart from the railway supply industry, it will give it financial opportunities, it will remove it from the shackles of Government financial control—inevitable in nationalised industries—and will provide it with a whole range of opportunities that are not available at present. That is why we will privatise BREL. It will be widely welcomed by BREL management and, I hope, the workers because it will give them the best opportunities.

Written Answers

4.1 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that there have been no written answers since last Friday's *Hansard*, which contained answers for Tuesday 17 November, and that yesterday's *Hansard* and today's *Hansard* contained no written answers? The work of the House is being impaired. Therefore, will you carry out an investigation?

Mr. Speaker: I was not aware of that. I will look into it.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I put down a question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about the consultation process, school management and the role of parents. In my question I asked for the answer to be categorised, but I was not given an answer at all. It is an important matter for parents in Scotland and I think it is an insult to the House that I have received no answer. Perhaps more experienced hon. Members will say that it has nothing to do with you, Mr. Speaker, but as the question of the rights of Members of Parliament I seek your advice and implore your action.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that I, too, have to say that it is nothing to do with me. I am not responsible for Ministers' answers. The hon. Member has made his point, and I hope that he will get a proper reply.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 11) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1902) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) (No. 2) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft International Trust Fund for Tuvalu (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Concessionary Television Licences for State Retirement Pensioners

4.3 pm

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for concessionary television licences for state retirement pensioners.

Many people outside the House would assume that there would be all-party support for a Bill that sought to introduce a more rational and just system for concessionary television licences for pensioners. Sadly, that is not the case. When a similar Bill entitled Free Television Licences for Pensioners was introduced in January by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), Conservative Members either abstained or voted against it. Eighty-six per cent. of Ministers trotted obediently into the Lobby to vote against concessionary television licences for pensioners and 100 per cent. of the "caring" Ministry — the Health and Social Security Ministers—voted against it. The Prime Minister did not vote, and I can only assume that by not voting she was declaring an interest as one of the few pensioners in the Cabinet.

During the June election, Conservative Members put pensioners high on the political agenda and talked a lot about the need to give them a decent standard of living and care. I assume and hope that there has been that change of heart by Conservative Members and that they will support the Bill to increase the number of pensioners who can get concessionary licences.

The importance of the issue to Labour Members has been well illustrated by the efforts made to change the existing legislation. The statutory authority for concessionary television licences is contained in the Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) Regulations 1970. An extension of that scheme was introduced in 1978 by the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees).

Following representations in 1983, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) pushed for a further extension to allow for physically and mentally disabled persons living in local authority residences or sheltered accommodation to receive concessionary licences. The House has been kept informed and aware of the issue by the hard work and perseverance of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), who has introduced no fewer than four ten-minute Bills since 1980. I know that he would agree with me that, ideally, the answer is not to introduce concessionary television licences but to pay pensioners a decent pension. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) obviously agrees with me. I hope that he will vote for the Bill. If he is unable to do that, I hope that he will vote for an increase in pensions when he gets the chance.

I hope that Conservative Members will give consideration to concessionary TV licences because we are just asking for fair play. At present, pensioners can be in exactly the same financial situation and have exactly the same income, but if they live in different households, or even in the same building, one pensioner can get a TV licence while another cannot. It is that inequality and

injustice that the Bill seeks to change. I have talked to pensioners and have received considerable correspondence from them in which they have said that they want, not freebies, but to be treated equally.

Over the past couple of years the Government have not shown the attention to pensioners that they indicated during the election that they would. In the short time that I have been in the House, we have seen the full impact of the Government taking away the funeral grant; legislation recently introduced whereby if pensioners manage to save £3,000 as security for later in their lives they will be denied housing benefit; and the severe cold weather payment negated by the increase in electricity prices. Above all, there has been a cut in real pensions because pensions are not linked to earnings. If Conservative Members appreciate the effects of those changes, will they look positively upon the Bill as it improves just one small aspect of TV licences for pensioners? If Conservative Members read the Peacock report, they will see that it states that many more pensioners rely on television for information and entertainment than other sections of the population.

The present legislation needs to be looked at. Under the present concessionary licence, it costs three times as much to collect the 5p licence cost as is received in revenue. It is clearly irrational and needs reform. The present inequalities lead to feelings of bitterness and inequality among pensioners. They are not the sort of feelings that we want to create.

The cost to implement the proposals in the Bill would be either £230 million or £330 million, depending on whether the cost was per household or per head. Compared with the amount of money that the Government have clawed back from pensioners and the amount of money that they have wasted advertising for share ownership, the cost is small. Its effect on income tax would be so minimal that I am sure that every rational hon. Member would support it.

If supported and allowed by the Government, the Bill would make it possible to alter the present unequal and unjust system of the cost of TV licences. Such a change would bring just rewards for the pensioners on Teesside who have campaigned hard on the issue, such as Syd Clay, George Dixon, George Short, Sid Spencer and the late George Sundell.

I am asking Conservative Members to think about a fair deal and fair play for pensioners. Can it be argued that, on anyone's definition of "fairness" it is fair for a pensioner or pensioner couple who are over 70 on a basic pension should pay for a TV licence when Mr. Thatcher and his wife, Margaret, at No. 10 Downing street have 13 televisions but, because that is a Crown property, pay nothing? Is that just?

4.10 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman rising to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Forth: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will not take points of order in the middle of the presentation of a ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Forth: One of the most nauseating sights in the House is the sight of the Opposition trying to bribe people with their own money—and it is repeated many times. They try that trick time and again, but fortunately the electorate have grown accustomed to it and have seen through it. Yet again we have before us another Opposition folly. They are lumping together in a most patronising manner all old-age pensioners. Opposition Members assume that all people of pensionable age need state assistance, handouts and support.

Opposition Members assume that all old-age pensioners have not made adequate provision for their later years and that they are not able to afford adequately the £1 a week that it costs for a television licence. They assume that pensioners must be subject to the kind of patronising claptrap contained in the Bill today.

Another difficulty with this kind of measure is that yet again it is an example of the blindness of Opposition Members when it comes to the indiscriminate giving of benefit. Opposition Members are quite happy to give taxpayers' money without question to everyone, regardless of whether they need it or not. They are not remotely cognisant of the concept—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. No interventions are allowed on a ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Forth: Opposition Members are not remotely cognisant of the concept of targeting benefits. Therefore, they bring such measures before us willy-nilly, believing in the most patronising and condescending way that they will buy the votes of those who will be truly grateful in spite of the fact that it involves yet again the taking of taxpayers' money from people and then giving it indiscriminately to those who may not need it.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) asked whether Conservative Members had consulted the electorate and whether electors had written to Conservative Members on this matter. They have not written to me. I would not expect the electors to write to me on it because most of them are robust enough and ready enough to pay for their own television licences.

The hon. Lady was honest enough to refer to the fact that this matter was brought before the House earlier in the year. The acid test is that it was then deliberated on and disposed of. There was a general election. I need not rehearse the results of that general election now. Suffice it to say that the Conservative party is back in government running the country responsibly and we are yet again the custodians of the public purse. We are taking a continued and responsible attitude to the raising of taxes and the dispensing of benefits. We will not try to bribe the electorate with the electorate's money.

The final proof of the matter lies in the fact that, when Opposition Members brought a similar measure before the House and it was disposed of, Conservative Members were rewarded by the electorate by being returned to power. For that reason, I am confident in asking the House yet again to reject this nauseous and patronising measure so that we, as responsible custodians of the taxpayers' purse, may enjoy the continued support of the electorate.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Miss Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Don Dixon, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Miss Joan Lestor and Mr. Frank Cook.

Concessionary Television Licences for State Retirement Pensioners

Miss Marjorie Mowlam accordingly presented a Bill to provide for concessionary television licences for state retirement pensioners: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January 1988 and to be printed. [Bill 57.]

4.14 pm

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to raise a point of order before—and if in any way I appeared to challenge you, Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I did not seek to do so—because I feel very strongly on this subject. Is it not a convention of the House that on the presentation of a ten-minute Bill, if an hon. Member rises to challenge that Bill, it should be put to a Division? I understand that that has always been the case.

When I presented the Renewable and Alternative Energy (Promotion) Bill, the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), who has left the Chamber, sought to challenge it. He was then so spineless that he did not have the courage to force a Division. We have seen a repetition of that spineless behaviour today from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to advise the hon. Member so that he might avoid being quite so cowardly.

Mr. Speaker: It is of course in order for the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) to oppose a ten-minute Bill. When I put the Question, the hon. Member indicated that he was against it. However, when I collected the voices, I did not hear him persist in that.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that we will not adopt the practice of opposing ten-minute Bills just for the sake of it.

Mr. Winnick: You have said, Mr. Speaker, that you hope that hon. Members would not oppose ten-minute Bills for the sake of it. Is there any way in which the mechanism can be changed? The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) spoke very strongly against the ten-minue Bill. When you asked for the "Noes" there was a very muted "No".

It is not only contemptible but cowardly for an hon. Member to speak as the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire spoke and then refuse to vote against the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not impute that motive to the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). This House is about very strong feelings. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the word "cowardly"?

Mr. Winnick: I have not changed my mind in any way. However, if you say that I cannot use the word "cowardly" on the Floor of the House, I have no alternative but to do as you say, Sir. My quarrel was with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire, not with you, Sir.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are not Opposition Members confused because they do not understand parliamentary democracy? Is it not the case that it is not necessary for Conservative Members to call a Division? Any hon. Member who was present in the Chamber on Friday will be aware that a Division was called against the Opposition's wishes. Do they not understand parliamentary procedure? They could have forced a Division themselves.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is another aspect to this matter of gutless Members not being prepared to follow their voices with their votes. A ten-minute Bill, especially early on in a parliamentary Session, must be queued for with only a chance of parliamentary debate at some later stage once leave has been granted for the Bill to be introduced. On rare occasions ten-minute Bills have been presented early in the Session and have managed to reach the statute book. However, with many ten-minute Bills, on a Friday towards the end of the Session, a Government Whip—this has happened under both Labour and Conservative Governments; I am not making a party point here—has shouted "Object" at the end of the discussion. Recently, Bills about pensioners and television licences have suffered as a result of Whips objecting late in the Session.

My point for you, Mr. Speaker, is that if there is no vote on leave to bring in a Bill, even though there is a muted voice, it would seem that it would be right for a Government Whip who has already perhaps given instructions that a vote should not be held not to issue instructions later in the Session to kill the Bill. Therefore, if Government Whips do not have the guts to oppose it now, they should not follow a guillotine-like procedure at the end of the Session. What has happened today illustrates that the Government are not prepared to argue the case or to test it in the Lobbies. My hon. Friend's Bill might suffer the fate of being lost without a Division.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) referred to hon. Members not having the courage of their convictions by voting. Is it not correct that the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who raised a point of order with you earlier, Mr. Speaker, did not have the courage of his convictions on Friday, when he did not support his hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron)? The hon. Members for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) were the only two Labour Members who had the guts to support the miners.

Mr. Frank Cook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) wants to find out how gutless I am, I shall see him outside.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that this behaviour shows us in a good light. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is right in saying that occasionally a ten-minute Bill gets on to the statute book. However, I must say to the House that any hon. Member who opposes it should do so from sincere motives and should carry his opposition into the Division Lobby.

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.22 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If there is to be further discussion, it should take place outside.

Mr. Patten: I hope that I shall be able to calm things down.

I realise that it may well be thought that some of the other Second Reading debates in the House during the next few weeks and months are likely to be a touch more controversial than this one; some may even be regarded as more important. But we should not underestimate the value of the Bill. Britain is the second largest investor in the developing world. From 1982 to 1986, our private investments totalled £6,727 million. International investment insurance is therefore particularly important for us. In ratifying the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency convention we shall be discharging an obligation that we implicitly accepted at the Venice economic summit earlier this year, and which we reaffirmed during the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting in September.

The Bill is required to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the convention establishing MIGA, which is an international organisation associated with the World Bank, and is intended to promote foreign direct investment in developing countries, primarily by offering would-be investors insurance against non-commercial risks. The Chancellor of the Exchequer signed the convention establishing the agency on behalf of the United Kingdom in April 1986. In order to become members of the agency, we need to ratify the convention; and before we can ratify, legislative provision is needed to give effect in domestic law to our obligations under this convention.

I should like first to give the House some background on the general subject of international investment insurance, and explain in more detail what the agency will do. The idea of insuring foreign investment against non-commercial risk is not new; it is more than a century old. In the late 1800s, state authorities in the United States guaranteed payment of interest and principal on railway bonds sold in the capital markets of London and Paris. Following the second world war, the industrialised nations began establishing programmes and agencies for investment insurance for their citizens. The United States began the first programme in 1948. Our Export Credits, Guarantee Department's investment insurance scheme began operations in 1972. Today, there are such schemes in 22 countries.

Foreign direct investment represents an attractive source of capital for developing countries. The investment return will be related to the commercial success or otherwise of the enterprise, unlike the interest paid on an ordinary loan. It can assist the process of industrialisation and help to increase employment, introduce new skills and transfer technology. However, such investment has been inhibited by investors' concern about non-commercial or political risks. The agency has been created to counteract that.

International efforts to establish an agency providing multilateral insurance began in the late 1950s, but did not build up a sufficient head of steam to proceed. In the early 1980s the idea was revived, and the convention establishing the agency was opened for signature in October 1985. To date, 62 countries have signed the convention, including 50 developing countries. Twenty have ratified, 15 of which are from the developing world. The 20 that have ratified have about 23 per cent. of the allocated shares. In order for the convention to enter into force, five developed and 15 developing countries, representing between them at least one third of the allocated shareholding set out in the convention, must ratify it.

We wish the United Kingdom to be among the founder members. We have already played a full role in the preparatory stages, and were the first of the five major industrialised countries to sign the convention. When we signed it last year, Mr. Tom Clausen, then president of the World Bank, noted:

"The United Kingdom played a key role in the negotiation of the MIGA Convention".

We have much to contribute to the agency, particularly during the crucial formative stages.

The agency's main activity will be to offer insurance, in the form of "contracts of guarantee", to would-be private investors. Those investors may come from other developing countries, as well as from the developed world. Four categories of risk will be covered: first, the risk of loss as a result of host Government restrictions on currency conversion and transfer; secondly, the possibility of expropriation of assets by host Governments; thirdly, repudiation risk, where the investor suffers a loss through breach of contract by the host Government, in cases where the investor has no recourse to a judicial or arbitral forum or where the decision of such a forum is unreasonably delayed or cannot be enforced; finally, loss as a result of military action and civil disturbance is covered.

However, the agency will be more than just an insurance agent. It will carry out a number of promotional activities designed to increase the flow of private investment to developing countries. It will disseminate information on investment opportunities, carry out research on investment issues, provide technical assistance and advice as requested by member countries and, particularly important, it will serve as a forum for members for discussion on questions of investment policy. Those activities, and the provision of insurance for particular investments, are intended to be mutually reinforcing. The promotional activities are likely to generate business for MIGA, and as the agency builds up experience in insurance across the developing world it will become better equipped to carry out its promotional activities.

The criteria for eligibility for investors and investments are, at the same time, broad and flexible. Eligible investments must be new and economically sound. The enterprise concerned should be run on commercial lines, and preferably should be in the private sector. Investments may comprise equity interests, loans made by investors with an existing equity interest, or other forms of direct investment as may be determined by the agency's board. One important point is that only investors from a member country may obtain insurance. Therefore, the United Kingdom must join the agency if British companies are to benefit.

[Mr. Patten]

The general operations of MIGA will be the responsibility of a board of directors, elected by a council made up of one governor appointed by each member. The number of votes each member has in the council is dictated mainly by its shareholding. The indicative shareholdings set out in the convention are based roughly on relative economic weight. Britain is likely to hold about 5 per cent. of the total shares. The board of directors will appoint a president, who will be responsible for appointing the staff of the agency. There are measures under the convention to ensure a reasonable balance of shareholding and representation in the board between developed and developing countries.

The agency is intended to be financially self-sufficient. That means that administrative expenses and insurance claims should be paid from premium income and other revenues, such as returns on invested funds. Initial financial contributions will come from members' share subscriptions.

Under the convention, the agency is specifically directed to co-operate with related international development organisations. I place particular importance on that point. It is to complement existing national and regional investment insurance programmes and agencies. We envisage close co-operation between MIGA and our own Export Credits Guarantee Department. Useful exchanges, in which we have been able to pass on the benefit of our experience in ECGD, have been going on for some time between officials here and those concerned at the World Bank in Washington.

I refer now to the details of the Bill. Legislation is required for three main purposes: first, for the payment of our initial subscription to MIGA, and for certain additional payments; secondly, for certain privileges and immunities for MIGA, its property and personnel; and, thirdly, for the enforcement of awards from arbitration proceedings held under the convention, and the powers of the courts in connection with such arbitration.

The first clause refers to the convention establishing the agency, and notes that parts of the convention are set out in the schedule to the Bill.

The second clause concerns payments to and from the agency. It authorises payments for the United Kingdom initial subscription. That is likely to be, in total, just over $52·5 million. Ten per cent. of that will be paid in cash, a further 10 per cent. will be deposited in promissory notes, and the remainder will be callable. The clause also authorises the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, to make other payments under the convention by order made by statutory instrument. Any such order would have to be approved in draft by this House. Similar provision is made for the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received from the agency.

The third clause provides that certain privileges and immunities, as set out in the convention, shall have the force of law in the United Kingdom. That is subject to certain protective provisions and arrangements. Privileges and immunities along those lines are standard for international institutions of this type. The relevant articles of the convention that confer the privileges and immunities are reproduced in the schedule to the Bill.

The fourth, fifth and sixth clauses relate to arbitral proceedings held pursuant to the convention. Under the convention, certain disputes between MIGA and its members and ex-members, should they ever arise, are to be submitted to procedures including arbitration. The convention also provides that any awards rendered in such proceedings are to be enforceable as awards of the courts in member states. That obligation is given effect by clause 4, which provides for the registration in the High Court of such arbitral awards, and for their enforcement as if they were judgments of that court. Clause 5 extends the power to make rules of court required to give effect to clause 4. Clause 6 authorises the Lord Chancellor to make orders to apply provisions of the Arbitration Act 1950 concerning procedural matters — for example, the attendance of witnesses and the production for documents — to such arbitration proceedings, were they ever to take place in the United Kingdom.

The seventh clause concerns Scotland. It provides for the application of the Bill there, and substitutes appropriate references to the Scottish legal system for certain expressions used in clauses 4, 5 and, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will be delighted to know, 6.

The eighth clause—it will give the hon. Gentleman as much gratification as the seventh clause—provides for the application of clauses 5 and 6 to Northern Ireland, with appropriate references concerning the courts and arbitration there.

Clause 9, the final clause, says that the Bill will come into force on a date to be appointed by the Secretary of State. It is intended that the appointed date will be the date when the convention enters into force for the United Kingdom. It formally extends the Bill as a whole to Northern Ireland. It gives power for the provisions relating to privileges and immunities and to arbitration to be extended, with appropriate modifications, to the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and any colony. That power is to be exercised by Order in Council.

There is also a schedule to the Bill. It contains various articles of the convention that are specifically referred to in the Bill, together with certain related articles. Hon. Members will find that the complete text of the convention was published in June of this year as Cmnd. 150.

I believe that the agency is a welcome new recruit to the battalion of financial institutions which are designed to promote development in developing countries. Its arrival on the scene is certainly timely. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Autumn Statement, our aid budget is set to increase in real terms over the next three years. Official funds are therefore set to play their part in the development process. New commercial bank lending to developing countries has declined sharply in recent years, because the banks have wished to reduce their exposure and because developing countries have sought to contain their debt service obligations.

The agency is designed to promote the flow of capital and technology for productive purposes to the private sector in recipient countries. It therefore conforms to our view that private flows to developing countries should in the long term, be mainly in the form of project or equity investment, rather than of bank lending for general balance of payments support. It conforms equally to our conviction that we must do more to help the private sector in the developing world. That should be one of our priorities—a priority for all donor countries and also

for multilateral donor institutions. The Bill will allow us to play our full part in the new agency, and I wholeheartedly commend it to the House.

4.37 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I agree with the Minister. The Bill is likely to be one of the less controversial matters to come before the House in the next few months. As he has given a detailed explanation of the Bill, I shall not go into the details of it. I begin by confirming the Opposition's support for MIGA. We hope for an early ratification to enable it to begin its operational life as soon as possible. As the Minister said, the purpose is to encourage foreign direct investment in developing countries, mainly by offering to private investors guarantees against non-commercial risks.

We offer our support because we recognise that development is about partnership — the partnership of official aid with private charities and commercial companies. All of them together can make their contributions, working with Third world countries towards the common goal of economic development. Foreign direct investment has always had a legitimate, if controversial, role to play in the development process.

We welcome the World Bank's initiative, because the prospect for finance for development in the Third world is gloomy. The Third world is facing financial strangulation through lost earnings caused by collapsed commodity prices, increased debt service burdens and a sharp curtailment in the availability of private finance. Between 1981-86, total net financial flows to developing countries have contracted sharply—from $139 billion to $84·7 billion in current dollar terms. That dramatic decline has occurred almost entirely in private flows. The steepest falls have been in bank lending and export credits, which last year fell to one tenth of their 1981 levels. Foreign direct investment has similarly contracted. According to the OECD, net direct investment fell by more than half of its 1981 level of $17 billion to $7·6 billion in 1985.

In response to the recession of the early 1980s, the private sector, far from embracing the challenge of enterprise in developing economies, has turned on its heel and fled. For many countries, trends in direct investment, bank lending and provision of export credits move together. The judgment of the market place on Third world creditworthiness, growth and export potential has provoked the private sector's ungainly retreat from the business of overseas development. Therefore, Opposition Members are delighted that the international public sector, in the form of the World Bank, is offering a helping hand to those faint hearts in the private sector. MIGA is really an extension of the international public sector, offering confidence-boosting measures to timid entrepreneurs.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Would the hon. Lady agree with me—I do not seek to make a party political point — that the experience of the private sector in developing countries has been an unhappy one, in most cases through no fault of its own? Many companies have been badly treated. An important aspect of the MIGA convention is that it will enable companies to have a good deal more confidence when they are badly treated.

Miss Lestor: I would not disagree with that. One of the reasons for the convention, as the Minister mentioned, is to provide safeguards and stimulate companies to go in the direction in which we want them to go.

For that reason and others, Opposition Members welcome the collaboration to which I referred. We recognise the validity of public and private partnership to promote growth and development. We are happy to extend what our Tory opponents often call the nanny state to multinational corporations. We hope that MIGA will help to persuade the private sector more readily to invest in the Third world, and restore the loss of finance that has occurred in recent years. We are realistic, however, in recognising that for the foreseeable future the role played by foreign direct investment in development will remain very small.

Although monetarists ignore the evidence, foreign investments cannot replace the crucial role of official development assistance. For many developing countries, especially the poorest, aid remains a crucial source of income to finance development. To most of them, the apparent luxury of hosting foreign investment is not available. Most foreign investment occurs in the industrialised world, which accounts for about three quarters of the total. The remainder is heavily concentrated in a few higher income nations, notably in Latin-America and Asia. The largest such recipients include Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong and Singapore. In marked contrast, the low-income countries hardly gain any foreign investment at all. Between 1980 and 1983, for example, Africa obtained only 3 per cent. of world overseas investment.

Figures for the United Kingdom show a similar pattern of concentration on the industrialised and richer developing countries. In 1985 only 16 per cent. of United Kingdom overseas investment, worth £1·4 billion, went to the developing countries, and Africa received only £95·4 million — just 1 per cent. of total United Kingdom foreign investment.

Those figures serve to illustrate the fallacy of the argument that private investment should take over the aid role. Despite the yearnings of Lord Bauer and others, the major multinational companies will not fulfil the theorists' aspirations. Africa does not loom large in boardroom agendas. For the poorest countries, the majority of which are found in Africa, official aid will remain the primary source of foreign finance. Last year, for example, 73 per cent. of the region's external finance was accounted for by official aid.

Even the better-off developing countries are becoming more, rather than less, dependent on aid. In 1980 the upper-middle income countries relied on aid for only 11 per cent. of their total financial inflows. Now aid accounts for 33 per cent., as a result of the sharp drop in bank lending and other forms of private sector finance. While we welcome the MIGA initiative, we have no illusions about the potential for foreign investment. It is no viable substitute for official aid and the Minister did not try to pretend that it was. It is official aid, well planned and well spent, which provides the firm foundations on which private investment can grow. Few companies are prepared to undertake the primary investment in infrastructure and so-called human capital that is required in the less-developed countries. Official aid, free from the constraints of commerce, can provide the necessary long-term provision of concessional finance. It is the public sector which must act as the pioneer, creating an environment in which private investment will eventually occur.

For those and other reasons the Labour party has strongly opposed the successive cuts in the aid budget. In

[Miss Lestor]

1979, when Labour left office, the absolute level of aid spending in current prices amounted to £1·6 billion and stood at 0·52 per cent. of GNP. Since then, United Kingdom aid has fallen to a mere 0·32 per cent. of GNP. If the real level of annual aid spending had merely remained constant at the 1979 level, the United Kingdom aid programme would have benefited cumulatively by a staggering £1·6 billion.

It would take many years of sustained aid increases to match the performance of the last Labour Government. The prospect of reaching the United Nations aid target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP seems even more remote. We all welcome the recent small increase announced in the Autumn Statement of about 1 per cent. in real terms, but the Government's overall aid performance has been shortsighted and ungenerous. Britain has tumbled down the league of international generosity. We led the aid donors of the Group of Seven industrialised countries in 1979, whereas today we are in fifth place.

What kind of leadership does that abysmal record offer to our major companies? A large and expanding aid programme would be the best catalyst available to encourage just the kind of foreign investment that it is hoped that MIGA will serve. I take this opportunity to urge the Government again to reaffirm their commitment to reach the United Nations target for official aid and to set a timetable of annual aid increases to achieve that target and to encourage other forms of investment. We must also ensure that our aid budget and the programmes of the major international agencies, such as the World Bank are of the very highest quality. Good projects and sound development are the best kind of investment. Too often, donors have favoured projects that suit their own commercially-based interests and not those of the recipient country. Fortunately, today there is a much greater awareness of the risks of aid-funded "cathedrals in the desert".

There is also much greater recognition of the need to focus development on human needs, and I hope that MIGA will contribute towards that. In the mid-1970s, the World Bank played a major role in shaping the debate about so-called basic needs and the strategy of redistribution with growth. After Robert McNamara left the bank and the chill winds of laissez-faire swept around Washington, these ideas seemed unfashionable. Today, the bank is returning to the agenda of the alleviation of poverty.

That turnaround is encouraging. It proves that concern for basic needs is not simply humanitarian but is a prerequisite for sustained economic growth. It is a strategy of investment in people. To ignore that dimension is, to quote Richard Jolly of the United Nations Children's Fund.

"an economic error of the most fundamental sort. Much evidence already exists of the economic returns to investment in human resources. To fail to protect young children at the critical stages of their growth and development is to wreak lasting damage on a whole generation, the results of which may well have effects on economic development and welfare for decades ahead".

Richard Jolly's analysis is humanitarian and it presents an economic case which is of fundamental importance to the promotion of foreign investment in the Third world.

Ultimately, the best guarantee of security for foreign investors in any country is a secure, well-fed and healthy population. Poverty, hunger and disease are the primary causes of the instability that commercial investors fear. MIGA can play its part, but without sustained effort by the international community to promote human welfare and economic development, the present decline in overseas investment is unlikely to be reversed.

Action to deal with the debt crisis is also urgently required to stimulate fresh flows of investment. The severe debt-induced austerity, in both Latin America and Africa, is causing a major slowdown in economic growth and investment.

Therefore, we strongly support efforts to achieve debt relief both in Latin America and Africa. We endorse the Chancellor's efforts to promote a plan for debt relief in sub-Saharan Africa. Bipartisan support for this initiative is warranted given the scale of Africa's plight, but since the debt plan was initially put into effect by the previous Labour Government, we have no difficulty offering our approval. Indeed, given that the agreement to convert former aid loans into grants was negotiated in 1978 by my friend and colleague Dame Judith Hart, I think that in the interests of determining accurate parentage we should stop talking of the so-called Lawson plan and refer now and again to the Hart plan. In any event, I hope that the Minister will prevail upon the Chancellor to acknowledge in at least one of his speeches on the subject of debt the Labour origins of his African debt proposals.

I hope that the forthcoming meeting in Paris will make real progress on African debt relief. There really is little chance for such countries to attract foreign investment while debt burdens are hung round their necks. Steps to improve their creditworthiness will also enhance their investment appeal.

Of course MIGA's purpose is to offer guarantees to private investors. That is a fair point, but it is also fair to ask what guarantees are offered to developing countries that accept such investment. The recent history of international investment and the growth of multinational companies provide plenty of fuel for controversy. The case of ITT and its attempts to destabilise the democratically elected Allende Government are, of course, well known — and brilliantly documented in Anthony Sampson's book "The Sovereign State: The Secret History of ITT". One must hope that malpractice by multinationals on this scale is rare. However, legitimate anxieties remain, about, for example, the practice of transfer pricing and other devious accountancy tricks designed to defraud Third world Governments of tax receipts and other income.

The tragedy in Bhopal highlights other risks. It is almost three years since the world's worst industrial accident killed at least 2,500 people, but the argument about responsibility and compensation still rages on. The Union Carbide company has tried to distance itself from its local subsidiary, even though it holds over 50 per cent. of the Indian company's shares. Meanwhile the Indian Government are suing for $3 billion on behalf of the claimants. This appalling case clearly shows the need for a clear definition of responsibilities and liabilities of multinational companies.

While MIGA is a timely initiative, it is disappointing that more progress on offering guarantees to developing countries has not been made. In the long run, more transparent and legally enforced principles to govern foreign investment will be required. While regulation and control of multinationals may seem unfashionable, it

would build confidence between both the investor and the host Government. That is what we want to see if investment is to take off as we hope.

Today it seems that the international community is concerned only with the interests of private sector investors—predominantly multinational companies that are among the most powerful institutions in the world. We trust that MIGA will display broader concerns, building on the work of its parent, the World Bank. We hope that MIGA will concentrate its activities on the poorer developing countries. It must try to persuade investors to risk higher levels of investment in Africa. If it is successful, it can broaden the geographical spread of foreign investment away from the newly industrialised developing countries towards the low-income nations that desperately need foreign capital. It can also facilitate investment between countries in the developing world. So-called South-South investment can complement the traditional patterns of investment from North to South.

MIGA must also ensure that the investment that it supports is of the highest quality. In recent years the World Bank has suffered justifiable criticism for environmental short comings of some of its larger development projects. The new World Bank president has addressed these worries and seems willing to improve project appraisal to take account of the impact on the environment. MIGA must follow the bank's example and refuse to guarantee any investments that fail to meet stringent developmental and environmental criteria.

The task facing MIGA is challenging, it must encourage investment in the best projects in the most difficult countries where entrepreneurs fear to tread. We shall watch its progress under the guidance of the World Bank with much interest.

4.55 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a great pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Eccles (Ms. Lestor), my namesake, on an issue where, yet again, we speak with a common voice and enthusiasm about something involving the developing world and the interdependent world. We frequently share platforms on this issue and, although I will not follow her down some of the routes spelled out in her speech, I join her and my hon. Friend the Minister in welcoming this Bill and the agency.

When we are looking at the World Bank and the change in the pattern of its lending, the hon. Lady and many of our colleagues will remember that the House sent a letter to Barber Conable. It was signed by 250 Back Benchers, roughly an even number on both sides of the House. It spelt out the direction and the pattern that we thought the World Bank should follow. Apart from the percentage argument, my hon. Friend the Minister agreed with that letter. It was a helpful move to show the way that many people feel. The letter was also supported by the Australian Parliament, the Canadian Parliament, members of the Senate and members of the Congress. Therefore, the question of interdependence and the transfer of resources in a meaningful and worthwhile way to the developing world is of wide concern.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on increasing the aid budget this time round. As one who has spoken on every occasion and even voted on this issue against my Government, I am interested to see that there is now a reversal of the original programme. However, we can become too mesmerised by the 0·7 per cent. of GNP. Frequently on public platforms, I have been able to point out that it is possible to put together an aid programme of 1 per cent. of GNP that would be going to the poorest countries in the world but still would not help any of the really poor people in those countries. It is important to increase the aid budget, but it should be increased as effectively as possible. That is why it is possible to give an enthusiastic welcome to the agency. It is another way of ensuring the effective transfer of resources in another direction into the developing world.

We all recognise that the three flows—trade flows, aid flows and private direct investment—all have a role to play. It is important that we recognise, especially through the difficult times of the past few years, that trade flows especially have declined and, as has been pointed out already, so has private investment and private flows. Therefore, aid flows still retain an essential role.

With this organisation, we seek to ensure that those countries most in need and which are always at the rough end of the stick, as we say in my part of the world, get a better deal. It is true that, naturally and sensibly, commercial decisions will be made to invest where there is likely to be the greatest commercial return. That would not be sensible otherwise. With this form of guarantee and help, companies will see that there are good commercial prospects in those African countries. The guarantee will mean that the argument in the boardroom about whether the company should invest here or there, and the myths about a country's record can be dealt with. It is a natural guarantee of the sort that most sensible people would seek.

I am also delighted that we are a main role founder member of this organisation. I welcome the partnership struck between my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this key area of increased transfer of funds and the interdependent world. This is important, as the Chancellor made clear to the interim committee in plenary session when the matter was introduced. He said:

"This morning I signed a convention which makes the United Kingdom a founder member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. I have long said that flows to the developing countries should be increasingly in the form of private equity investment rather than Bank lending. In my speech to the Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in 1984, I expressed the hope that we should be able to bring to fruition a workable plan for the insurance of private overseas investment. I am delighted that we have done so. This should make a real contribution to removing the obstacles to private investment in the developing countries."

In September of this year, the Chancellor said to the development committee:

"The World Bank Group has an important role to play in encouraging private investment flows. I welcome the setting up of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. The United Kingdom was an early signatory and we have already embarked on the parliamentary procedure for ratification. I hope that MIGA can begin its operations as soon as possible."

It is welcome to see the Treasury, not the most prominent body in aid and development, recognising the importance of the interdependent world and the need for the transfer of resources, and being prepared to take a lead in bringing this about. I am unstinting in my praise for the way in which the Chancellor has set out the issues involved in the debt problem, which will become overwhelming unless other agencies show greater urgency.

I do not disagree with the hon. Member for Eccles about the original transfer from aid loans to grants. There

[Mr. Jim Lester]

is no reason why we should not ensure maximum bilateral understanding and support. However, some people believe in transferring back from grant aid to loans as a preferable system. The battle is not over. We must maintain those values in which we believe and extend them to our European colleagues, and particularly to such countries as Japan. Unless we do this, there is little hope for those sub-Saharan African countries who carry most of their debt with the official agencies rather than with the private sector.

This partnership is valuable and worth supporting. I hope that hon. Members who take an interest in these issues will ensure that their support is known. We are all good at criticising when we do not like things. Occasionally, it is useful for both sides of the House to come together and support something, and let that message be known, rather than constantly harping and criticising. This will help to ensure much wider contact with those countries which we are seeking to help. Those of us who take an interest in these matters know that official aid flows, although important, tend to go from Government to Government, so contact is through Governments, rehabilitation commissions and their parastatals. These countries have a wider infrastructure and it is important to involve that infrastructure.

Recently I was in a refugee camp in Djibouti, in Dikhil, where refugees from the Ogaden war have lived for some eight years. They trade and are entrepreneurs. They may trade with the world programme for food, but it is the only way in which they can operate. They sell food in the town so that they can afford to buy things. That is not the sort of thing that private investment will take up, but the point is that in every person, however poor or destitute and whatever his status, there is an instinct to do something to improve himself. Whatever country one goes to, one finds people in a better way of business who will welcome this input and the possibility of partnership.

Often this is a tender flower. Some countries such as the United States try to make the growth of the private sector in developing countries a measure of success and of whether they get further aid. Those countries should be very careful. In countries such as Jamaica, which do not have a commercial background or a tradition of development business, if the prospect of commercial return is applied too quickly and too harshly and if people are expected to go from zero to producing a commercial return within two to three years, that will kill off the very entrepreneurial spirit that we want to encourage.

Many of us strongly support the bank system, where people are given time to develop their business and management instincts and all the things which are required in a successful entrepreneurial development. In regard to the discussions, I remind my hon. Friend that one needs to set realistic targets and potential for the investments which we encourage. We must not go too far too hard and therefore defeat the whole object.

I do not think that the Bill is designed to give weak-kneed entrepreneurs protection where they will not proceed themselves. I think there is a reasonable prospect of their needing protection against the very things that MIGA is established to do. It is difficult to make a commercial decision based on war expropriation of assets by host Governments and exchange restrictions. As I travel through Africa, companies ask me to see if I can do anything to facilitate the repayment of money that is being held or to encourage the repatriation of profits, because that would help them to make more investment in those countries. That is a real and understandable concern. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that a guarantee agency such as MIGA should give an assurance against unreasonable risk, if I may put it like that. Reasonable risk in a traditional investment is fine, but this is unreasonable risk.

I am sure the agency will be welcomed by those with an interest in the developing world. Many multinational companies have not just a commercial interest in but an overall commitment to world development. Many of us recognise that the future of our standard of living is in investment in the developing world. There is no way that the developed world will trade with itself for ever more. Therefore, the change of emphasis towards realistic investment in the developing world is essential and should be encouraged.

The agency will be widely welcomed in the developing world itself. My hon. Friend referred to the signatories, the countries which hopefully will be recipients of the private investment. Another valuable element in the Bill is that, in the discussions between various partners and shareholders, there will be agreement and wider education hopefully on both sides about what is needed to make successful private transfers and investment.

For all those reasons, I welcome the Bill. I hope that, when the agency's title was proposed, consideration was given to what the acronym would sound like. I hope that MIGA by name will not be meagre by nature. I hope it will be generous and supportive. I would perhaps prefer to give the body its full name, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

5.9 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), whose record on aid has been so consistent and enlightened. Evidently this is not a controversial measure. It is a limited proposal — useful, effective and constructive, but not exactly far-reaching. Indeed, when one realises that the agency's authorised capital will be only one thousandth of the total value of Third-world debt, one appreciates the scale of the thing, which is why I had exactly the same thought as the hon. Member for Broxtowe has just enunciated about the acronym "MIGA" and the word "meagre". If I have worked out correctly the pound-dollar relationship, we will have to contribute directly and immediately between cash and promissory notes roughly £7 million or perhaps more, because the United Kingdom contribution is $10 million. That is not very much.

While I welcome the Bill, like all hon. Members who have spoken, I find it difficult to get ecstatic about it. I spent three weeks in Brazil this autumn and saw directly the consequences of the debt crisis. Having spoken with representative politicians and economists from President Sarney downwards, I think the ongoing delay in facing up to the problem is the urgent, dominant issue.

Although it is beyond the direct purpose of the Bill, I thought that the Minister might have taken the opportunity to make wider references to the most up-to-date thinking of the Group of Seven. These things move very slowly. From the Seoul meeting which established the agency in October 1985 to ratification has taken more than

two years. One wonders whether there is a more rapid system of doing these things, particularly since in the end we are not talking internationally about vast sums of money but about agreement on a limited sum.

As the Minister said, MIGA is not a new idea, but it is good to see it finally put into effect. One hopes that it will enable more foreign investment in profitable production which will be of value both to underdeveloped countries and independent companies and enable them to build a mutually beneficial partnership. MIGA is a small international industrial insurance company. I congratulate the Government and the Minister. I welcome the agency and the United Kingdom's involvement. I hope that it will be a harbinger of determined wider action to tackle the major issues of Third-world debt.

5.13 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): First, I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend on the speed with which the matter has been brought before the House. It is a remarkable tribute to the British Government that they should have been singled out particularly for the effort that went into establishing MIGA and for the work that went into framing the convention. Like hon. Members on both sides of the House I greatly welcome this important extension to facilitate trade in the Third world.

No one could sit on this side of the House without reflecting how great is the interest among Opposition parties in the Third world. It is a sorry day for the House when so few hon. Members have come to take part in this debate on what is, after all, a very important matter which greatly affects several countries which are great friends of ours. This convention will play an important part in increasing the flow to developing countries of private equity investment, instead of bank lending.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) as to the consequences of this terrible over-lending for some developing countries. However, I would like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on the particularly enlightened work which the Treasury has undertaken recently. I understand that a good deal of discussion is taking place as to what further steps Britain might be in a position to take to assist Third-world countries in resolving their terrible debts which undoubtedly make their difficult lives even harder. This is therefore an important step in facilitating non-debt-creating capital flows. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, our aid budget will increase in real terms during the next three years.

That is an important achievement on the part of my hon. Friend, and I hope that all sides of the House will acknowledge the wisdom of the Treasury in agreeing that this should go ahead. Nothing could be more timely, with Ethiopia being on everyone's mind at the moment, and the heightened publicity that has been given to it. Although this may not be the right forum for it, I must say that I hope that my hon. Friend will do all he can to ensure that, if a request is made, the Royal Air Force Hercules are released again to facilitate food distribution in that most unhappy country.

Nothing could be more timely than to try to facilitate the extension of private sector investment in developing countries. Indeed, private sector trade with developing countries is critical to their future. I think that British industry is not aware of the many opportunities that are available in the Third world. However, in fairness to British industry — the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) is not in her seat; I do not mean to speak behind her back, but she was a little unfair when she spoke about weak-kneed entrepreneurs—British companies have had a wicked time in the Third world.

The Third world is scattered with the relics of British companies, some of which have been bankrupted by sequestration of assets, by war and by famine. British business has every right to view with extreme caution, and some cynicism, the opportunities that are available to it. Nevertheless, having regard to the fact that there are many substantial opportunities, with a little assistance and with a little push, British industry could play an important role.

The MIGA convention is an extremely important extension of a highly effective aid programme. My hon. Friend at Question Time recently made much of the tributes paid to the British aid programme. I have seen that aid programme in operation in some parts of the world, and would like warmly to endorse those tributes. Our aid programme is marked by the effective way in which we give aid, by the direct way in which it helps those who most need it, and by the fact that we are not hidebound in our thinking, but all the time look for the most effective and easy way to facilitate the lot of Third-world countries. It is a valuable extension to the many different types of assistance that we make available to industry to help its trading efforts. I hope that British industry will respond positively, pick up the opportunity and run.

Not before time, there is a new realism in developing countries. Even in the most shambolic, private equity investment is now welcomed with open arms. British industry, with the Confederation of British Industry, and other local industry bodies, should carefully assess the countries that they believe are the most likely to welcome the provision. They should then select the projects that are easiest to fund and the countries in which MIGA guarantees will be extremely important to the overall success of any project.

I hope that the private sector will seize the extended opportunity offered to it by the convention. To murder a great saying of Mark Twain, this is one of the few occasions when a banker is likely to lend one his umbrella before it starts raining.

5.20 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): In opening my remarks on this important international development, I should like to say how glad I was to hear that when my hon. Friend introduced the Bill he laid emphasis on the fact that all sections of the United Kingdom would specifically be named and have the opportunity to benefit from the MIGA measures. That may help to heighten awareness of in all parts of the kingdom of the opportunities that are afforded by this interesting development.

I was touched equally be the remarks of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) who, sadly, is not in her place at the moment. She drew the attention of the House to a matter that is of great concern to the entire world —the worsening terms of trade, especially for Africa. I have recently had the privilege of being a member of an all-party delegation that visited the United Nations. In some of our many discussions during that interesting visit, it became clear that the problems of Africa and of the terms of trade will be with us for many years to come. The present financial problems of the world are amplifying

[Mr. Michael Jack]

those difficulties. That is why any measures that can be introduced to increase the amount of investment and thus trade in the world must be seen as positive contributions.

During my time in New York, I became aware of another matter that we miss in the somewhat cloistered surroundings of the Palace of Westminster—the way in which people in other parts of the world perceive what we are doing. That was brought home to me most forcefully when visiting the United Nations Children's Fund. Dr. Richard Jolly, who has been mentioned in the debate, told us how grateful he was to the hon. Members who had signed an early-day motion praising the work that had gone into securing immunisation facilities for people in the Chatila and Bourj el Barajneh camps in that strife-torn and trouble-ridden country of the Lebanon. He said that the text of the early-day motion had reached Lebanon and had given great courage and heart to those who were involved in that vital work.

I cite that as an argument that what we do here this afternoon will no doubt be communicated to other countries that are considerably less well-off than ourselves as a gesture and statement of how important we consider the subject of finding ways, other than direct governmental intervention, of improving opportunities for investment in those countries. The development of the private sector throughout the less-developed world is most important. That was another theme that came out of our discussions at the United Nations, especially on the United Nations development programme. Even in its environmental strategy, for example, it sees an important role for private venture and private capital.

Although the measure may act as a catalyst to encourage private involvement, we must also recognise the need, as other hon. Members have already suggested, to develop an economic regime that can respond to private investment. I am delighted that the United Nations has taken such a leading part in monitoring such measures through its Economic and Social Council.

It is worth putting the MIGA measure into context. The report of 4 February 1987 by the Commission on Transnational Corporations, which was made to the United Nations, sees the MIGA measure as part of a much wider attempt to try to gain co-operation in commercial matters. That growing commercial partnership has covered areas such as consumer protection, international trade law and even pesticide use. Therefore, it is part of a wider development in the world to try to combine various efforts, and should not be seen simply as an isolated example.

I should like to pay tribute, through my hon. Friend the Minister, to the fact that the United Kingdom is a founder member of the MIGA development. It is good that this country has been seen to be taking the lead in yet another important stepping stone on the way to international co-operation in this vital work. It focuses again on the important point that Britain is taking a leading role in the international community where specific projects are involved.

I have already mentioned the United Nations development programme. To that I should add a tribute to our work and contribution to UNICEF. I know how strongly we as a country were praised when we visited the United Nations. I feel certain that, if we returned, we should be thanked for our support for MIGA.

In my business activities before entering the House, I faced the problem of assessing overseas investments. The measure is about minimising risk. Although Portugal is now a member of the Common Market, the company for which I worked considered investing in Portugal's agricultural activities before Portugal began its journey into membership of the Community. After one had visited the underdeveloped part of that country — underdeveloped in the sense that the infrastructure had been built by the Salazar regime but then deserted because investors had become worried about the political risks of that regime—one was left wondering why nobody was developing that part of Europe. The recurring answer was, "We are not sure how certain our investment will be."

I am sure that, when looking around the world, at parts of Africa and South America where stability is always an issue, many people will welcome the MIGA proposals because they underwrite the answer to the question, "Is it a safe place to invest?" Addressing that problem, together with the other forms of commercial insurance that are available, will underpin people's intentions to invest internationally.

I recognise that the other problem facing any such development is world debt. That was brought home to me by an article in the *Financial Times* of 27 March 1986 which stated:

> "Debt service payments by developing countries exceeded new borrowings by an estimated $22bn in 1985, according to figures published today by the World Bank."

Certainly, the $1,000 billion total of liabilities for 1986 —that is according to the World Bank—amplifies the major problem of Government and bank lending that is faced by the less developed world.

Therefore, the MIGA proposals open the door to a new tranche of investment capital that could be put into those areas of the world. Most importantly, the generalised projects can be targeted to specific activities and the risk can perhaps be more carefully assessed in terms of economic investment potential and the cover that could be afforded by the proposals. The proposals will assist in generating that additional investment capital and help to counter the problems of the debt burden.

The record of foreign private investment is a sad tale. In 1981, for example, $17 billion was invested, but in 1984 that amount had dropped to $9·3 billion and that is a matter for considerable concern. As this country and the Western world in general have pulled out of a recession, corporate sector profits have increased. When the Minister spoke of training, hon. Members made reference to the use of those profits and suggested that more money should be put into training. Private enterprise companies in the Western world should reconsider their priorities and consider the use of such increases in funds.

One of the other major effects of the MIGA initiative is the fact that—it has not come out in the debate so far — the agency will offer to encourage and advise on investment decision-making in the Third world. That is extremely important. We are not talking about little bits of charity going to unspecified activities. We must consider it as a two-way process and try to encourage the correct identification of possible investment targets. That is clearly laid down in the proposals for the MIGA convention. I commend that advice and encouragement as I believe that that is a fundamental effect of the measure and it means that we can get excited by this initiative. It is a positive tool.

However, I am rather concerned about the American continent. I was delighted to learn that the South Americans have warmly taken to this measure. That region has presented difficulties for private investment. However, when the Minister replies, I hope that he will address the question of the United States and its contribution to development. I am somewhat unclear whether the Americans fully support this measure. Obviously, I am aware of their difficulties vis-a-vis the United Nations' contribution. However, I should like to be reassured that they will fully participate, because their participation is important in making the package credible.

The measure is an important additional back-up facility to our own export credits guarantee activity. The maximum liabilities to which we are presently committed — as reported in the export guarantees overseas investment annual report by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 31 March — are only £150 million. Obviously there are facilities to expand the amount of trade that can be backed. If the MIGA proposals receive the right amount of publicity it will enable people to understand that not only can the political risks be covered, but that there is an obvious possibility for commercial risks to be covered. Indeed, the two go hand in hand.

If the House passes this Bill and it eventually becomes an Act, I ask the Minister that we take seriously the promotion of opportunities for investment in the most risk-free way. It is important that the Government take the responsibility to get the message across to industry. In this country we do a good job in telling people about Department for Trade and Industry back-up for schemes based in the United Kingdom. I suggest that we do likewise for overseas "risk aids".

There is a drawback to any investment activity abroad. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer discussed this matter on 25 September 1984 at a joint meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, he correctly drew attention to some of the difficulties that affect those wishing to invest. The MIGA proposal tries to take away some of the risks. Indeed, hon. Members have referred to that and the question of bringing funds in and out of the countries involved. However, there are other bureaucratic problems.

At that meeting, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said:

"I welcome the emphasis the managing director has given to the importance of borrowing countries taking steps to dismantle or relax administrative or other obstacles which often apply to inflows of direct investment. This is a matter to which I believe the executive board should always pay close attention both in its regular surveillance and in its examination of country programmes. An important advantage to developing countries, especially debtors, of seeking private direct investment is that it can service itself as, and only as, it contributes to profitable output . . . I hope we shall be able to bring to fruition a workable plan for the insurance of private overseas investment."

That last sentence refers to MIGA, but his other remarks refer to removing barriers so that advantage may be taken of something such as MIGA. That is a fruitful area for us to consider.

The measure has a number of practical implications. Before I entered the House I was involved with the fruit and vegetable business. That business draws many of its raw materials from the less developed parts of the world. There is an existing mechanism for that trade through third party agents and trading houses. I believe that that business lends itself — it is a golden opportunity — to direct investment in the countries that are potential suppliers. To that end, I can see a role, for example, for Britain's leading supermarkets. They should talk with their major suppliers in this important industry and discover the potential within the food industry for that industry to invest directly and generate controlled sources of supply — those countries that would produce the raw materials of the right quality for sale in this country.

The sale of Third-world food products is certainly expanding. People are much more willing to try new things. I believe that seeking to lengthen the supply chain and to invest in that chain right back to source would be a good way to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the MIGA proposals. MIGA removes politically-orientated risk. It is a catalyst and generates interest in the subject of overseas investment. I commend it to the House.

5.36 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I welcome the Bill. I congratulate the Minister on introducing it and I welcome his speech. I wish the Bill a speedy passage through both Houses so that it may become law as quickly as possible.

I welcomed the content, tone and style of the speech of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). I would rather that she was not the hon. Member for Eccles. I do not mean that in any personal sense and that is not to say that I would not wish the hon. Lady to be a Member of this House; rather, I recall with great affection her predecessor, Lewis Carter-Jones. I spent many happy moments, indeed hours, talking to him during the previous Parliament. I got to know and love him very deeply and I miss him greatly in this House. No matter how long the hon. Lady stays here and no matter how distinguished her career may be, I shall think of her predecessor as the hon. Member for Eccles. That is not to say that I did not welcome the hon. Lady's speech and indeed, all the other contributions that have been made.

The personnel in debates on aid have changed a bit since I had the privilege and pleasure of being the bag carrier, as Parliamentary Private Secretary, to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), when he was the Minister for Overseas Development. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is still here, as he was in those days when he was accompanied by the hon. Members for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) and for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Long may he stay where he is.

Mr. William Powell: Yes, indeed. In fact, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley is the only face that I recognise today apart from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who was always present when overseas matters were discussed in those happy days not so long ago. Indeed, the Minister is extremely lucky to be able to carry on the work that was undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury during his years at the Department. I know that he is assisted by officials of the highest calibre, who are deeply devoted to their work. They do magnificent work, not only on behalf of this country, but on behalf of many people elsewhere.

[Mr. William Powell]

The hon. Member for Eccles made an important point, on which it is worth dwelling for a moment. Inevitably, in a debate of this kind, hon. Members will tend to concentrate on the backcloth to the Bill, and try to put it into the context and perspective of the general aid scene. The hon. Lady's point about equality of overseas aid was as important as any that can be made on this subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said that it would be possible to devote 1 per cent. of our gross national product to overseas aid, and for the quality of that aid to be no higher than it is at present. That is undoubtedly true—it is possible to spend aid money badly, just as it is possible to spend it well—but we owe it to those whom we are trying to assist to spend every pound of our overseas aid budget in the most effective way.

I must confess that, although I concede that certain multilateral aid agencies do outstanding work, I have—alas—a bias against working through many such agencies. Unfortunately, the quality of the aid with which the European Community has provided some Third-world countries has not been as effective as it should have been; I regret to say that that applies to some of the contributions made down the years by UNESCO. However, I feel that the central thrust of British aid has been as well directed as we are ever likely to make it. We have had some castles in the desert, and that may happen again in the future, but we are becoming more experienced.

We should try to channel as much of our aid as possible into infrastructural development—the building of roads and bridges to open up communications systems in countries that will then be able to operate more economically. We must also try to channel as much as we can through private development agencies such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and some of the charities run by the Roman Catholic church. All those agencies are working at local level, and all contain people who are experienced in agricultural and agriculture-related schemes. Such schemes may have a much greater impact than the building of international airports, and other such huge projects.

I hope that we will do everything possible to maximise the quality of our overseas aid contribution, and try to eliminate schemes that are grand in their conception, inefficient in their execution and disastrous in their long-term consequences. The Bill will give us a modest additional resource, which—as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) pointed out—will enable us to do exactly that. Mistakes made in the 1960s and 1970s had a disastrous environmental effect on some of the countries that we are anxious to assist, and we must avoid such mistakes in the future. Deforestation, for instance, will have a profound long-term impact on the countries that have been affected by it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) spoke of the need to stimulate private industry and enterprise. What worries me is that, at present, the big fish in the commercial sector seem to benefit most. Companies such as GEC and Plessey are the most anxious to become involved in aid work. I do not for a moment deny that they have been involved in projects of considerable importance to the countries where they have been working, and, if they have managed to make a profit at the same time, I shall not complain. However, it is important to encourage companies that have not been involved in such projects to invest in the Third world.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, my constituency contains a thriving—indeed, booming—small manufacturing sector. Many of those companies have never been involved in any kind of international trade. They would not know how to go about becoming involved—trying to identify markets where they can assist, and to master the rules that they must follow if they are to trade successfully and prosperously. I hope that some kind of sponsorship can be found—perhaps using the mechanisms mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley, such as the CBI or local enterprise agencies, or perhaps more direct sponsorship through seminars organised by my hon. Friend's Department.

I am not putting forward any definite ideas, but a much more intensive effort must be made to encourage those who have not been involved in aid work to realise that there are openings for them. They may then be able to identify new markets, to the benefit not only of the countries in which they are investing and trading, but of our country as well.

Let me emphasise, however, that one of the most disagreeable features of the development of aid policy in the Western world—and elsewhere—in recent years has been the tying of trade to aid. Too many countries look on their aid budget merely as an extension of subsidies for their own companies to engage in trade. We were not the leaders of that trend, but we have been forced to react to some of the schemes, projects and incentives that have been made available to our competitors. That does not make for good aid, and it entirely misses the point of our involvement in it.

I do not argue for a moment that we should not try to derive advantage, if it is legitimately there, for our own country and our own people from our overseas trade. However, to imagine that the purpose of our aid is simply to tie as much as possible to companies resident in this country is wrong, and is likely to lead to numerous mistakes. Regrettably, that trend has been increasing.

Let me make a final point which I regard as being of considerable importance—something for which we in this country must argue much more clearly. There is no doubt that a few people outside take a considerable interest in the subject of aid. They keep me on my toes in my constituency, and I am sure that all other hon. Members are frequently lobbied by their constituents on aid matters.

Alas, support for the aid programme generally among electors is not strong. In particular, one hears the siren calls of protectionism in some industries to protect them from what they would regard as subsidised sales into Britain from countries such as Bangladesh or Pakistan.

I speak with some feeling on that matter because I represent part of Northamptonshire which has been part of the boot and shoe industry, in which many thousands of people have been engaged down the years. They have found that imported shoes, frequently, but not always, from the Third world, are much cheaper than those manufactured in Northamptonshire.

I have to face constituents, not just in the boot and shoe industry but in the textile and clothing industries, and so on, who complain that they are being undercut by cheap

imports. I try to tell them as clearly as I can that we have a choice. Let me single out one prominent and important, although not exclusive, example—Bangladesh.

We either enable trade to grow between Britain and Bangladesh so that it can acquire some economic stability, perhaps even a modicum of prosperity, from what it can sell to Britain, or subsidise it from beginning to end. All that Bangladesh is able to offer us is its manufactured goods—clothes, shoes or whatever—and if that is the cheap product of their cheap labour, we should be willing to accept those goods, offered in good faith. We must tell the British people that we either accept them, even though they are cheaper than those produced by our industries, or the money that we shall have to spend on feeding that country's people will be much greater. In other words, there is a knock-on effect to everything, which is not clearly enough understood in Britain.

It is important that the Northamptonshire shoemakers should concentrate on quality products that cannot be produced in countries such as Bangladesh, rather than chase the mirage of imagining they will be able to produce goods more cheaply than is possible in the primitive low-wage economies in the East. The same applies to the textile industry. It is important that we should get across to our people the message that protectionism against the poorest in the world is a fatally flawed policy which we must resist in all circumstances.

I have inevitably taken some time to canvass issues that may be slightly wider than the narrow provisions of the Bill and that has followed some of what other hon. Members have said. None of the wider aspects that I have highlighted in the aid debate should diminish my welcome to the Bill, but I want to ask two questions which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to take some time—who knows, perhaps quite a long time—to reply to.

Will the effect of the Bill be confined to what we traditionally regard as the Third world, or will it be extended to some of those areas which have tended to be excluded from aid provisions but in which it may become politically increasingly important for us to invest? I take the point rightly and forcefully made by the hon. Member for Eccles that it is wrong that our aid should go to countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea — the newly industrialised countries. Often they offer the most attractive markets for private industry to invest in, and investment will continue because of that, but it is important that our aid should be concentrated in those areas which have not enjoyed the industrial take-off that has occurred in some areas of the Pacific rim.

Some countries have been devastated by the political and military events of the past decade. All or nearly all of the economic aspects of Lebanon, a formerly prosperous country, have been ruined as a result of its political developments and its people are increasingly impoverished and in need of our sympathetic help to enable them to recover from the recent calamities.

Almost every day we hear from our newspapers how serious the crisis is in many countries of Eastern Europe. Those have been excluded from our aid budgets in the past and, for the most part, we have been content to leave them well alone. However, we know that, not just in Romania and Yugoslavia, but in Poland and Czechoslovakia, matters are becoming ever grimmer.

With new opportunities arising out of the policies of the Soviet Union, we may—it is too early to say—not go down the path that has been followed in the Russian empire of Eastern Europe in the generations since the second world war. If we are to have glasnost not only in the Soviet Union but in Eastern Europe, which may be the case, I hope that we shall be able to play our part in enabling those other peoples of Europe to enjoy at least the opportunities for progress and expansion which those of us who are lucky enough to live in Western Europe have been able to enjoy in the generations since the second world war. I hope that my hon. Friend will find a moment or two to comment on those aspects when he replies.

That is enough from me. I welcome the Bill and I wish it a speedy progress through the House.

5.57 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am happy to follow my hon. Friends and it is no wish of mine to upset the spirit of unity which seemed to be created early in the debate by the hon. Members for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on behalf of the Labour party and for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on behalf of the Liberal party, who seem to have been rather left to it by their hon. Friends. Perhaps we can tempt those one or two who step in from time to time and sit on the edge of the green Benches to contribute. I am sure that those hon. Members would appreciate some support.

Let me restore the balance immediately by referring to the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) about the hon. Member for Eccles. For understandable reasons relating to her predecessor, he regretted her arrival from Eccles, but it would be churlish not to acknowledge her real concern for and the genuine contribution that she has made to this subject over the years. I remember that well, as a member for the focus committee of the Royal Commonwealth Society. The contribution that she made today bears out that concern. My hon. Friend the Minister has shown no less a concern in the debate. I am sure that what he said was valued by all hon. Members.

These wretched initials have already been referred to. Whenever I heard my hon. Friend the Minister referring to "this meagre initiative" I thought that he was being unduly modest. Perhaps we could suggest to him that he takes up the matter with his international chums, so that they either change the combination of initials or do what happens in places such as NATO and put them into French so that they are switched round. I shall not translate into French now, but they might come up with something like BIGMA — which might be a more satisfactory combination to preach to the uncoverted.

Mr. Chris Patten: My hon. Friend has made a perfectly understandable point. If, in future, we made the "MI" rhyme with pie or sky, that would get around the difficulty to which he has referred.

Mr. Bowis: Whatever the Minister wants, so long as he does not call it MIG anything, which has other connotations.

This is a pioneering scheme, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's work on it and, through him, to the people who created it. He rightly referred to the Venice conference where is started, which was an example of the best work of an international conference. All too often we perceive conferences as rows about South Africa and so on, whether they are to do with the Commonwealth or other

[Mr. Bowis]

international issues. Sometimes, however, good comes of their work and that is a tribute to the countries and Ministers concerned. It is a tribute too, to the civil servants behind the Ministers of the various countries, who go to considerable lengths to create the schemes for us and make them work. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my tribute for this welcome measure on behalf of his colleagues and Department.

This is a good scheme, and I certainly welcome it. Almost everyone else who has spoken today seems to have been round the world in the past few weeks or months. Almost invariably, they start by saying, "When I was in Timbuctoo." I have not been anywhere as exotic as that, but I have been to Wandsworth, which is no less exciting a place, even if its connection with the Bill may seem slightly remote.

When we examine the problem of overseas aid, we must try to take our constituencies and electors with us on it and related subjects. Often politicians must give a lead to their constituencies to pressurise Ministers, Governments and countries to do more for the developing countries of the world. That is not always as difficult as we might sometimes think. Our electors, as taxpayers, are right to want a balanced use of taxpayers' money and Government action. They look to Governments to provide a proper balance, and often tell one that what they want first is a solution to the problems at home. Of course there are real problems in our cities and urban areas that need solution, but I do not believe that constituents are blind to the needs of the world. They have a conscience about the world's problems, and we can guide the development of their consciences so that they understand the issues.

Whenever pictures of disasters around the world are shown on television, there is an immediate and genuine concern among the people of this country that something should be done. That is now happening again with the starvation problems in Africa. That is the sort of thing about which people have genuine and immediate feelings, which they convey to their politicians. Work to solve starvation is understood, because it is dealt with in headline stories.

Although this initiative is not an immediate response to starvation headline stories, people will welcome it because they sit back and ask themselves why these countries have problems today. The answer is, because they could not solve them yesterday. How can we help them to solve problems today so that they become less acute tomorrow? When people think about that, they understand the initiatives that are needed worldwide to bring together this sort of initiative with direct and indirect aid from Governments.

This measure ties in well with initiatives that the Government have taken in other areas, such as those for the sub-Sahara and the problems of Third-world debt. To enable the developing countries to overcome their problems, we, as a world community, must help them to develop their own economies. The Bill goes some way towards achieving that aim. There must be a combination of Government and voluntary sector aid with investment from private industry. The figures from this country, when aid from those three areas is counted together, are impressive. A partnership of all three is needed. When that partnership works well, it succeeds.

I welcome the all-party support that has already been given to this measure. However, I could not help noticing the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Eccles for the schemes in the Bill to protect British investors from the threats of nationalisation — I think they call it expropriation abroad. Perhaps the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends will go on one day to protect investors from a similar threat at home. It is good that they recognise that our investors should be protected from that threat abroad.

I should welcome clarification of one or two of the Bill's provisions. Frequently, the problems that firms that are investing abroad face are not caused by the country in which they are investing. The world is an interlinked community, and sometimes, the actions of the citizens or state in a neighbouring country to that in which a firm is investing can cause problems. Will the Bill cover risks incurred by a firm due to the neighbours of the country in which it is investing, or will there be endless problems of litigation and arbitration to sort such problems out? If there are endless anythings, as we all know too well from Export Credits Guarantee Department problems, the small company can go to the wall here while it waits for claims to be sorted out.

Will special encouragement be given under the scheme to smaller firms? We need to do more to encourage small firms to invest abroad. They often have the expertise that goes well in a small developing country and the goods that that country wants. Will smaller firms in partnership with local firms be given special consideration? That is a good way of bringing together the world's communities—by bringing together the small firms of the world, and getting them to solve its problems. Will encouragement be given to small firms in this country that are run by ethnic minorities to invest in these countries? Often, such firms have cultural links with the countries concerned, and they should be encouraged and pushed in the direction of the developing nations.

Can I be given some reassurance about what happens when a company is registered in more than one country? I think that the Minister said that, until Britain had signed the agreement, British firms would not be protected. After we have signed the agreement, will British firms with partners in countries that have not signed the agreement face a complication or is there a straightforward way of ensuring that those firms are protected?

The hon. Member for Eccles spoke about Bhopal. I do not want to speak about that case but to ask whether the taxpayer will be protected in claims against a British firm that gets into problems because of negligence and malpractice in another country. It is quite right that we should protect our firms around the world when they are conducting business efficiently, honestly and ethically, but if a firm is guilty of malpractice can we be assured that the British taxpayer will not have to pick up the tab for what would be, in effect, a criminal charge? I hope that I can be reassured about that.

I hope that in allocating funds and in encouraging people to go to other parts of the world, certain areas will be highlighted. Other hon. Members have touched on this. It is important that the poorest countries receive assistance first and that firms are encouraged to go there rather than to the rapidly developing countries in the Third world. It is important to encourage training schemes, because training and communications, such as roads, and irrigation schemes are important for developing countries. If we can encourage such schemes, in a short time those

countries will become self-sufficient and we can work with them as genuine partners in the world economic community.

Above all, I welcome this Bill because all too often when looking at world problems the British, the French, the Italians, the Americans and other countries tend to look at their own zones of interest. We concentrate on the Commonwealth, the French on their former colonies and the Americans on what they see as their areas of interest. We look at the world as a whole all too infrequently. Perhaps coming into the European Community has helped us to understand the Francophone countries more than we used to, but many parts of the world are still largely untouched by British interests and support.

This Bill helps us to look at the whole world as a community. If in looking at world problems and in identifying the world's less fortunate members this Bill goes some way towards encouraging us all to work together and to help the people of the developing countries to solve their own problems and to become developed, it will make a contribution that we can welcome not only today but in many years when we look back to this debate.

6.13 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): It is a pleasure to follow the thoughtful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). In the course of my speech I shall take up a couple of the points that he made. My first impression of the debate is that there is no representative here from the SDP. I remember being challenged by that party and its supporters at a general election joint meeting. They told us that we were not doing enough and they pretended to occupy the high moral ground on overseas aid. However, a representative from that party is not here for this debate.

I welcome the Bill. Today and on many other occasions my hon. Friend the Minister has explained the significant amount of overseas aid that Britain gives in various ways. It is a vast amount and only four other major industrialised countries do better. Of course, quality rather than quantity must be the main consideration. There is no great point in merely being able to recite statistics about how much aid we or other countries give, unless that aid is closely geared to quality and infrastructure. Aid from Britain is highly prized abroad for the development of Third-world countries.

Our official aid is complemented by considerable private investment from British businesses. The total flow from official and private sources is significant and exceeds the 1 per cent. gross national product target of the United Nations. The Overseas Development Administration administers all our relief and I know that it is very concerned to see aid reach the poorest communities. If the poorest countries are to receive real help rather than temporary palliatives, they should get aid to establish infrastructure that will enable them to provide the services that their people need.

From time to time in my post bag and in this Chamber I hear the cry, "If Europe has so many food surpluses, why does it not just give food away?" I am not sure that that is the sort of long-term aid that poorer countries really need. If we took that course it could have a variety of unfortunate ill effects. The main one is related to the fact that virtually all those countries are trying to promote and build up their own agriculture and infrastructure. If we give food and similar items to those countries as a matter of policy and do it over a longish term, we will by definition undermine the agriculture of those countries and the people will become dependent on agriculture in the donating countries. It is perhaps a difficult and harsh decision to decide not to give food to poorer countries, but in the long run it is the only course that will ensure stability in the countries that need our aid.

As I said, our aid can take many forms and does not involve merely giving away free food. I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea who complained in the nicest possible way that, although he had been in the House since June, no one had sent him abroad. I am sure that after his participation in this debate he will receive many invitations. One of the great advantages of those of us who have had the opportunity to go abroad, especially to poorer countries, is that we can see what can be done and where aid can best be given.

Last year I was fortunate and honoured to be invited to lead a delegation to Gabon, which is a French-speaking country. It is a Third-world country in receipt of overseas aid. Its main concern was that it wanted more aid, and one accepts that concern. The delegation was an all-party one and in the course of our visit it became clear that there were other concerns. The first was that Gabon would like to have closer contact with Britain, the British Government and the British people. That is the other point about which I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea.

It is not correct to assume that, because countries are in the French sphere of influence, we should leave France to do the work and to make the contacts. That is not for purely selfish reasons, but because those countries wish to have closer contacts with Britain — clearly, they are happy to have British overseas aid — and they wish British businesses to compete more effectively for projects in their countries. I welcome that attitude by the Government of Gabon.

Even though Gabon welcomes assistance, certain difficulties are experienced by British business men that are not experienced by French business men. The French Government seem to be much more able to underwrite feasibility studies in Gabon, and possibly also in other Francophone countries; that enables businesses to get off the ground. I am told that our Government is poor at that and that business men have to take their courage in both hands and go out, spend money, and just see what transpires. That may be an honourable thing to do, but it is unfair competition when British businesses have that initial hurdle to overcome.

French business men are able to compete on much more favourable terms because in those overseas countries where we are supposed to be providing aid, the French Government allow much more competitive rates of interest. For example, I have been told that 15-year loans at 2 or 3 per cent. interest are not uncommon. That makes it difficult to invest in overseas countries where aid is needed. It is difficult for business men to say that they should go to that country and compete when they do not know whether the Government are behind them. If the Government do not encourage business men in those ways, they will look for softer markets.

British business men also believe that they do not get the help from the Export Credit Guarantees Department that they should. I accept that I am only repeating hearsay, but I have been told that, particularly in Gabon, firms have difficulty in finding out precisely what guarantees

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they may be offered and at what rates. In the Balinga iron ore mining project, a joint project with French business men, British business men have to work in the dark because they do not know what they will get at the end of the day or the terms under which the project will operate. That is unsatisfactory, and I hope that when considering our attitude towards overseas aid and what can be done in some of the donee countries, my hon. Friend will consider that.

In Francophone Africa, where we are trying to involve business men in overseas aid projects, some of our business men do not trouble to learn the language of the country in which they are running their businesses. It is discourteous to send business men to a country in which they are trying to invest if they do not speak the language. Language assistance, with French in particular, for potential exporters would be welcome and useful if we are to encourage our business men to take their rightful part in the infrastructure of the Third world that we all want to see. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.26 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): It is imperative that we always recall that we are part of an international community, that we are part of one world and that we are all interdependent. It is in the interests of the developed world to see the Third world develop, not only for sensible, humanitarian reasons but so that developed countries will have additional countries with which to trade. The legislation that we are considering simply reinforces the fact that we are part of one world, encourages the flow of investment for productive purposes among member countries, in particular among developing countries, and supplements the activities of the World Bank in reconstruction, development and international finance. It must increasingly make sense that there is a growing recognition that many of the problems that we now face require more than the resources of a nation state to resolve. They require international action. Nowhere is that more evident than in assistance to the Third world so that it can resolve its own difficulties.

I have a recurring nightmare that I am standing in the fields of Korem and that, as far as the eye can see—it is difficult to think of an area near Westminster that is as large, but one could think of perhaps four or five football pitches—are people who have come to Korem because they are starving, and children are literally dying in front of my eyes. I, and I imagine other hon. Members, thought that that nightmare was over many years ago and that, because of the concern of the international community, it would not recur. However, the international community has not been able to resolve that problem.

We have not managed to help parts of Africa stop fighting each other. I am bitterly depressed that there seems to be no movement in Ethiopia between Eritrea and Tigré to even begin to resolve their difficulties. I am depressed that some countries within the developing world seem to have the attitude that in moments of difficulty they can look to the international community for assistance and otherwise simply ignore the good advice and recommendations of the international community. That must be so with Ethiopia, where 80 per cent. of State investment in agriculture still goes into inefficiently run State collective farms that produce only 10 per cent. of the nation's food, while little is done to encourage peasant farmers to grow more food for themselves.

The Bill laudably and commendably sets an international framework in place but also demands mutual contract. We should play an important role. I am delighted that the aid programme in Britain is now set to increase in real terms from £1,235 million this financial year to £1,420 million in 1990-91. That means an extra £70 million of aid next year; £140 million extra the year after, and £185 million extra in 1990-91. That is excellent news.

We must play our part in trying to eradicate poverty. However, that demands and expects a response from other countries. It demands a reciprocal contract which shows that they have obligations to the international community to resolve their difficulties and problems. From many countries in Africa, it demands a greater commitment to resolving boundary and other disputes without recourse to force of arms and the massive spending that that involves. Indeed, much of the cash crop in Ethiopia goes to Russia to pay for arms. It also demands a greater commitment to resolve disputes without recourse to arms, because inevitably that results in massive numbers of refugees. The number of refugees in the world in general and in Africa and parts of Asia in particular is growing year by year. Refugees are not only human tragedies, but cause massive dislocation to the economies of the countries which give them shelter and refuge.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I am interested in the theory that the hon. Gentleman is propounding in a genuine manner, especially in relation to what is happening in Eritrea. However, will he recognise the tragedy in southern Africa and the destabilisation of Mozambique, Namibia and Angola and the incursion of the South Africans and South African-backed regimes? That has meant massive famines and a dislocation of agriculture, industry and transportation and also genocide in southern parts of Mozambique and the murder of innocent children. All that is happening as a result of South African-backed arms and little or nothing has been said or done by this Government to influence the role of South Africa in the destabilisation of the southern part of that massive continent.

Mr. Baldry: I understand the hon. Gentleman's sentiment. For two years I had the privilege to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She has a particular responsibility for southern Africa. I cannot think of anyone who has worked harder than my right hon. Friend to bring purpose and resolve to eliminate apartheid and therefore bring justice to South Africa.

Wherever the force of arms is used to resolve difficulties, it leads to dislocation, refugees and the entrenchment of poverty. While we must have a commitment to play our part, other nations must also play theirs. Countries such as Ethiopia should not look blindly to the assistance of the international community in times of difficulty and ignore the best advice of the rest of the international community at any other time.

African countries such as Zaire, which have released enterprise and encouraged initiative, are doing well and improving their economic prospects. If the international community as a whole can work together with those

countries, there is no reason why such nations should continue to go backwards. There is no reason why Africa should be locked into a declining spiral of poverty, famine, disease, pestilence, war and the horror stories which I have witnessed before, which we saw in 1984 and which inevitably will occur again. We should never see those horrors happen again, but they will. They are recurring not because of the failure of the West or the developed world to respond to the needs of Ethiopia, but because no progress has been made to resolve the fundamental internal problems of Ethiopia which are controlled by Ethiopia itself.

I very much hope that the House and the country will continue to make the elimination of poverty and hunger in the world one of their foremost objectives. That presupposes the need for the international community to co-operate to help developing countries to create and develop their own infrastructures and encourage their industries and economies to grow. That is a duty for us all.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), I do not believe that there is any shortage of good will or support for that duty among our constituents. People in this country want to see the rest of the world develop. We often underestimate the desire in this country to see a world free of hunger where the developing countries are seen to be growing positively, with prospering economies. There must be a mutual contract. We can play our part, but other countries must play their part. There must not be a simple one-sided contract.

I commend the Bill to the House. I particularly commend the work of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development in ensuring that those issues are high on the political agenda. Let no one think that those moves can be only one-sided and that it is simply a matter of the developed world giving to the Third world. Both have an important role to play; they are mutually dependent. Unless both sides are prepared to be involved in such a contract, the contract is worthless.

6.36 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): This has been a well informed and extremely thoughtful debate. Once again, I was impressed by the usually well orchestrated orgy of congratulations from the Conservative Benches for the Minister. However, for once there has been some reason for that congratulation, and I must say that that is not often the case. That does not mean to say that no questions need to be asked about some aspects of the Bill, and I want to pick up some of the points that have been made this afternoon.

It is a particular pleasure for me as a member of the Labour party foreign affairs team to support my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). She played such a distinguished role in her previous time in this House and is now the distinguished Member for Eccles and the Labour party spokesman on development. Her record in the One World organisation and her activities recently in Africa show her profound knowledge and experience in this matter. I am pleased to support her today.

The Minister took us through the Bill clause by clause in the second part of his speech. Perhaps he is not expecting too long a Committee stage. Nevertheless, I will take up his challenge and try to deal with some of his points.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles said, the Opposition support the establishment of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency. I use the full title, as the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) prefers it to the "meagre" acronym. However, we support it only as part of the measures necessary to stimulate growth in the developing countries. We welcome the Government's recognition of yet another area in which market forces work to the detriment and not to the advantage of orderly progress. We are glad that in this sector, if not in others, the Government support intervention to affect the decisions of multinational corporations.

However, questions must be asked, and I was pleased that, among others, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) asked them. What guarantees are there for the host countries against, for example, low wages in multinational companies, against dangerous workplaces and safety problems in the workplace? My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles rightly mentioned negligence at Bhopal. What guarantees are there about the closure of plants, which suddenly creates havoc and problems far greater than those that existed before the plant was set up by the multinational? It is not only in developing countries that we have experienced those problems; we have experienced them particularly in Scotland—some people might think that it is a developing country. What guarantees are there with regard to transfer pricing?

Sadly, attempts to establish codes of conduct for foreign investment have been resisted by the major industrialised countries. In the 1970s, a little progress was made in establishing guiding principles to govern multinational investment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development prepared a set of guidelines, but they have no legal force. In the Common Market we had the Vredeling proposals, and similar negotiations to establish a United Nations code of conduct have been bogged down by argument about the seemingly unenforceable legal status of the codes.

While MIGA is a good, timely and appropriate initiative, it is disappointing that more progress on offering guarantees to developing countries has not been made. In the long run, more transparent and legally enforceable principles to govern foreign investment will be required. While regulation and control of multinationals might seem unfashionable to Conservative Members, it would build confidence between the investor and the host country, which in the long term would be to the advantage of both.

The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) seemed to misunderstand the position when he said that private companies have had a bad deal. Some countries have been ripped off by multinationals, so it works both ways. The developing countries need some protection.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman keeps talking about multinationals. With regard to the size of the funds that we are considering, are we talking about the activities of multinationals?

Mr. Foulkes: That may be the case with regard to the size of the fund. It is important, when talking about a general principle and a fund that can expand, to deal with that aspect.

My second question for the Minister concerns fraud. Those of us who study the European Community closely —it is not a most enthralling occupation, but, as I know to my cost; the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has a particular passion for it — are aware that some

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international funds have a tendency to be exploitable and open to fraud. The scheme is designed to assist investment from overseas. Article 13(c) of the convention allows investment by local persons and organisations to be covered as long as the money comes from outside the host country. Thus, there is potential for fraud.

I shall give an example that might help the Minister. Suppose Senor A has a bank account in the Cayman Islands, which is a pleasant place to go and a popular place to have a bank account to salt away this kind of money. Suppose he invests his money in a factory but General B, who may just happen to be his brother-in-law, commandeers the factory for army use. General B gets a free factory and Senor A gets his bank account replenished, courtesy of MIGA. Will MIGA be able to deal with it? Will it have the staff resources to detect that fraud? That may seem a far-fetched example, but if one considers the operation of not only the funds in the European Community but other international funds, one can foresee that arising.

My third question for the Minister is prompted by the remarks of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, about the size of the fund. Exactly how much is the British contribution? The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said that it was about $10 million, but perhaps the Minister will confirm that. My question is not about the size of the fund but about where the budget for it will come from. I hope that it will not come out of the Overseas Development Administration budget and that it will not lead to a decrease in bilateral or multilateral aid.

My fourth question concerns the commercial operations that the fund will be able to support. Article 13 of the convention limits the guarantees to those operating "on a commercial basis." Will the Minister explain what that means? For example, are co-operatives, which are an important method of ensuring an appropriate level of development in some of the poorer developing countries, deemed to be operating "on a commercial basis"? Will they be available for assistance from MIGA? What about the trading arms of non-governmental organisations that involve themselves in these operations?

My final question—the Minister mentioned this in his introductory remarks but he did not clarify the position—relates to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Article 66 covers territorial applications. It says that it applies to

"all territories under the jurisdiction of a member"—

the United Kingdom—

"including the territories for whose international relations a member is responsible, except those which are excluded by such member"—

in other words, the United Kingdom—

"by written notice".

That obviously brings in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Clause 9 requires an Order in Council, which is the usual method by which we deal with these matters, to extend it to the Channel Islands or any colony. It is strange to see the word "colony" in a British Government Bill. I did not think that we used that word any more. If the Minister consulted his colleagues in the Foreign Office, he might discover that a better formulation is "dependent territory".

Will the Government start with a blanket exclusion, which would stop these sham covert companies that are set up in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man benefiting from this convention? I hope that they will be excluded, because it could affect our companies and some of those of the independent territories. There are many other examples about which we could ask, but it may be more appropriate to leave some of them for the Committee stage.

I hope that such funds will not be able to establish, support or encourage the establishment of any arms factories. Again, we might explore that matter in Committee. I am sure that even some Conservative Members wish to explore the role of the South African Government, if they ratify the convention, in the operation of the agency.

I reinforce what my hon. Friend said. The most positive way of ensuring the safety of any commercial company's investment in the Third world is by making sure that the people are healthy and well-fed, that they have job opportunities with reasonable wages and conditions of service and that there are vibrant democracies in such countries. That is what Opposition Members are principally working towards. Until that is achieved, we shall need agencies such as MIGA. On that basis, the Bill has our general support, but we look forward to the day when we see healthy, vibrant democracies and economies in the developing world, so that such an agency is no longer necessary.

6.50 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: By leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—I have wanted to say that for many years — promised us a lively and lengthy consideration of the Bill in Committee. It is conceivable that we shall not need to timetable our proceedings, but I shall look forward to many detailed discussions with him at a later stage about Senor A, General B and the rest of the happy family whom he described.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) led the debate for the Opposition with an interesting speech. I am sorry that she and I do not have more opportunities such as this to trouble the scorers. She referred to the financial prospects for the developing world and, with some justification, said that, in many cases, they are rather gloomy. She condemned the fall in foreign direct investment as an ungainly retreat. I must say—it follows what my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) said — that I recently heard, with some appreciation, the Finance Minister of one developing country rather wistfully say that the foreign investment bird is an interesting, if rather predictable, creature; it does not care to land where it is likely to be shot at. That piece of folk wisdom is much more widely appreciated in developing countries than perhaps was the case a few years ago.

I am delighted that so many developing countries are running their economies in ways that encourage rather than discourage foreign private investment. When I visit developing countries, I am regularly asked to do what I can to stimulate private investment and to help in the development of the private sectors of recipient countries. I am sure that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley would be active on behalf of his constituents were they involved in such a case. I am often asked by hon.

Members to take up with the Governments in developing countries the issue of blocked remittances from British companies that have invested in such countries and might be keener to do so again were they not encountering difficulties in getting some of their investment profits out of the countries involved. I am also encouraged regularly to interest the Commonwealth Development Corporation in investments in aid recipient countries. That admirable institution, whose value is well recognised in the House, has played and continues to play an extremely important role in the development of the economies of aid recipient countries.

The hon. Member for Eccles referred to the United Nations aid target and the target for official flows. It is rare that people talk about the other Pearson target, the target for official and private flows. I am delighted that, under this Administration, we have surpassed that target in every year but one. Last year—1986—the figure was 1·34 per cent. I agree with what the hon. Lady said about the importance of ensuring that the social impact of structural adjustment programmes is taken into proper account when they are designed. As she knows, we have been advocating that matter in the World Bank and other multilateral institutions and have taken to heart the arguments that were put forward by Dr. Richard Jolly and others. Dr. Jolly's work in this respect was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack).

The hon. Lady suggested that Dame Judith Hart was the real author of the Chancellor's debt initiative, which is of course a manifestation of the growing economic strength of this country. That observation stretched historical antecedents a trifle far. I hate to make partisan points on occasions such as this, but we were rather less convincing in taking debt initatives when we were a major debtor than we are now that we are the second largest investor in the world.

In a characteristically thoughtful speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) expressed pleasure at the fact that 75 per cent. of our aid programme goes to the poorest countries, but reminded us of the importance of playing a significant role in the discussions that are taking place and will take place next month on providing more assistance for the most debt-distressed countries in Africa. The House knows that we owe a good deal to him and to his colleagues for the all-party report on debt, which was released a few months ago. The Chancellor's debt initiative reflects many of the arguments that are set out in that paper.

My hon. Friend referred also to the enterpreneurial instinct that cannot be eliminated. I agree with him. It seems that Mr. Gorbachev also recognises that proposition.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said that he was sorry that the Bill was not more exciting and that it did not move him to ecstasy. I hope that we were at least able to warm him up gently, even if we did not give him as torrid a time as he would have cared for. He said that he recently returned from Brazil. I am sure that he is delighted that Brazil has been one of the largest recipients of British direct foreign investment in the past few years.

My hon. Friends the Members for Crawley and for Fylde talked about the effectiveness and quality of our aid programme. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde referred to his discussions at UNICEF, to which I have already referred. He asked me about the United States of America. The United States of America has supported the establishment of the agency. It signed the MIGA convention on 19 June 1986. The United States Administration are seeking congressional approval of the appropriations that are needed to meet the cash share of their subscription, subject to this—I realise that "subject to this" can cover all sorts of eventualities—the United States is expected soon to ratify the convention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) paid a wholly appropriate tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and to officials in the ODA. Both tributes are richly deserved. My hon. Friend referred to the importance of non-governmental organisations in our aid and development efforts. He will be pleased that, recently, I was able to announce a 50 per cent. increase in the funds available for the joint funding scheme, which will, of course, help non-governmental organisations such as the ones that he mentioned to play an even more important role in developing countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) spoke about the importance of carrying public opinion with us, and I fully endorse that view. He also asked a number of specific questions about the Bill. He asked whether the risks covered by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency included the risk of actions by neighbouring states of the state in which the investment is made. That was a challenging question to which I am pleased to say I have the answer. In certain circumstances, the risk would be covered. For example, MIGA would cover the loss suffered as a result of military action or civil disturbance.

My hon. Friend also asked, as did the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, about losses suffered by firms through their own negligence or wrongdoing. My hon. Friend wanted to know whether the taxpayer would have to meet the cost of that negligence. I can assure him that the taxpayer will not have to pay, because the risks are not covered by the convention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) raised a number of points and perhaps I may write to him on them. Among other things, he noted the absence from our debate of the SDP, which may or may not still exist. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) referred, not unreasonably, to the situation in Ethiopia being exacerbated by the civil war there. All of us who recall that only three weeks ago a convoy of trucks carrying food was shot up and burned out by members of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front will bear in mind what he said.

This small but immensely valuable Bill has had a warm welcome throughout the House. I am grateful that it has been endorsed, broadly speaking, by the Opposition Front Bench and I am sorry that that warm endorsement was not replicated by Labour Back Benchers, who I am sure had pressing engagements elsewhere. I look forward to further exchanges in Committee about the family mentioned by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. I hope that the Bill will have as smooth a passage through Committee—however long that passage may be—as it has received this afternoon.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

MULTILATERAL INVESTMENT GUARANTEE AGENCY BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making payments under the Convention referred to in that Act; and

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received by the United Kingdom in pursuance of that Convention.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Common Agricultural Policy

7.2 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8250/87 on Common Agricultural Policy reform, 8761/87 and ADD 1 to ADD 4, and 9066/87, on implementation of agricultural stabilisers and 6116/1/87, on agricultural income aids; and endorses the Government's objective of securing effective control of Community agricultural expenditure which is in the interests of the farmers, the taxpayers and the consumer.

Our debate concerns a number of European Commission documents on agriculture—in particular on wide-ranging changes proposed to the existing operation of the CAP to make it subject to much tighter budgetary discipline. The debate is timely because we are in the middle of crucial discussions on the paper that is the most immediately important—the one dealing with agricultural stabilisers.

I shall endeavour to walk a tightrope between giving the House as much information as I can on the state of the negotiations and avoiding talking for too long. I hope that all hon. Members will be able to raise all the points that they wish to raise. If I can catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I intend to wind up the debate—first, to enable me to respond to hon. Members' contributions, as I am very much involved in the negotiations, and secondly because my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is still in Brussels.

Let me begin with the background. The exercise in which we are currently engaged was effectively launched in June when the European Council called for a review of adjustments already made to the common agricultural policy and for the identification of further measures needed to complete the process of reform, including measures to ensure that budgetary discipline is fully observed. The Commission's report, document 8250/87, entitled "Review of action taken to control the agricultural markets and outlook for the common agricultural policy", which is before the House, formed the first step in its response to that request.

The report covers four main issues. On the first, which is the review of reforms, the Commission notes that the process of reform is only one of the factors influencing farm incomes. It points out, too, that the present exercise is a continuation of reform rather than a beginning. It is important that the House should note that the savings from reforms since 1984 will have risen to a figure for 1987 of 6·6 billion ecu or £4·2 billion. If the measures starting with dairy quotas in 1984 and the other steps taken since—in particular, steps taken in various price reviews and in the Council on dairy and beef products last December—had not been taken, agricultural expenditure would have been even more severely out of control. That suggests that reforms work.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): How much of that saving is the consequence of transfers of responsibility for spending from the Community to member states?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall endeavour to give my hon. Friend an answer at the end but, off the cuff, I should have thought that it was only a very small proportion.

Reforms are having their effect, but it remains true that guarantee expenditure has risen by more than 40 per cent.

in money terms in the same period. Therefore, although difficult measures have been taken, causing difficulties for our farmers and the farms elsewhere, guarantee expenditure continues to soar. While acknowledging that external factors such as the world market and the dollar can significantly influence budgetary expenditure, the Commission presses the firm need for further savings if we are to get proper budgetary discipline. Much remains to be done, and not just for budgetary reasons. If we do not take measures now, the risk is that agricultural expenditure next year will be £3 billion over the guideline.

The House and the farming community know that, in addition, there is the problem of surpluses. Unless we take action, the cereal surplus could reach over 100 million tonnes in a few years' time. Although butter stocks are decreasing, they still represent 223 days' supply throughout the Community and the figure for skimmed milk powder is 170 days. There are considerable problems with rapeseed, too, as production has increased by 65 per cent. this year alone, with large increases in support costs as a result.

On the second issue—the control of production and expenditure—the report notes the measures that have already been taken to reform the CAP, citing the introduction of milk quotas, restraint on prices of key commodities at recent reviews, the limitations on intervention buying, the introduction of guarantee thresholds in some sectors, and the application of co-responsibility levies, to which, of course, we were and remain opposed. These actions have had a marked effect on stock levels. For example, United Kingdom stocks of butter, although still high, have fallen by 20 per cent. in the past 12 months. Stocks of skimmed milk powder have fallen by as much as 85 per cent. The Commission outlines its plans for stabilisers in the various commodity sectors and I shall discuss the detailed proposals later.

On the third issue in the document—the preservation of the European pattern of agriculture and the outlook—the report acknowledges that account needs to be taken of the effects of CAP reform on the rural environment. That is becoming increasingly important and I am glad to say that the United Kingdom has been playing a leading role in persuading the Community and Council of Agriculture Ministers to recognise that CAP reform needs to be carried out in environmentally friendly ways and accompanied by measures to help farmers to adapt to the necessary changes. I recall that, as Minister of State, I took part in one of our first debates on the environment and agriculture when we were taking the lead in pushing the concept of what are now known as environmentally sensitive areas. That is increasingly a part of our discussions.

In addition, as the House knows, the Government are taking a range of actions along the lines set out in the documents on farming and rural enterprise published in the spring. We are following up those actions now in the Farmland and Rural Development Bill, the diversification scheme and in the further tranche of environmentally sensitive areas, the terms and conditions applying to which I hope to announce shortly. As a further example, the United Kingdom has been pressing for an additional study by the Commission on the utilisation of agricultural land — one of the key decisions that we succeeded in achieving in the price review earlier this year. There has been a great deal of discussion in the Council during the past few days on set-aside, to which I shall return.

Another issue covered in document 8250 is external relations. As hon. Members will be aware, a new round of multilateral trade negotiations is now under way in the GATT—the Uruguay round—and agriculture will be one of the key issues in those negotiations. As promised in document 8250, the Commission subsequently submitted an outline of the approach that it wishes to pursue in the GATT round.

Member states have, with inevitable differences of emphasis, endorsed the overall approach and the paper has been tabled in Geneva. It is not a mandate from the Council but a broad indication of approach, and we took the view, as did others, that it was important that the Community should have something on the table early for discussion in the GATT round. Although this is not the time to dwell on the detail of that approach, I underline the fact that it contains a clear commitment to reducing the level of support for agriculture. In the United Kingdom we broadly favour that approach. We will have reservations on details, but the approach will allow much greater play of market forces and will encourage the development of more rational policies for agriculture worldwide.

Document 9066/87 includes a rather detailed proposal to implement the agreement at this year's price-fixing to include clementines and satsumas within the intervention system with guaranteed thresholds. The proposal would also include nectarines within the intervention system and it will establish a guaranteed threshold for mandarins, which are already covered by intervention arrangements. Broad agreement has already been reached on those proposals, subject, of course, to clearance by the House.

I wish to say a word about the present state of negotiations. As the House knows, in June the European Council gave a mandate to the Agriculture Council to draw up proposals on agricultural stabilisers, designed to ensure proper budgetary disciplines for introduction into the various commodity regimes. The starting point is document 8761. We have made it clear throughout—the Prime Minister has constantly stressed this—that we would be prepared to consider measures for the future financing of the Community only if an effective set of stabilisers could be agreed to prevent the continual overruns in agricultural spending.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Has my right hon. Friend seen the latest news sheet from the European Democratic group, of which the Conservative party is a member? It was published and sent out by Central Office and asserts in an unqualified way on page three that the VAT limit will rise to 1·6 per cent. in 1988. Will my right hon. Friend tell us whether the Conservative group in Europe knows something that we do not, or are the British Government still committed to 1·4 per cent. for the foreseeable future?

Mr. MacGregor: That is not a matter for me, but I think that I have made the position clear. At the forthcoming European summit, we will be prepared to consider measures for future financing only if we can achieve some of the other matters we have mentioned, including effective control over stabilisers.

Following earlier discussions, Agriculture Ministers met again on Monday last week with the aim of completing our discussions on the Commission paper on stabilisers and reaching decisions to be put to the

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European summit at the beginning of December. After several rounds of discussions on the key issues and on the proposals for all the individual commodities, we adjourned around Wednesday lunchtime. While I recognised that some Ministers had inescapable commitments—I had plenty myself—during the the rest of the week, I was very critical of the decision not to return to Brussels until yesterday morning, because it seemed to me that this simply did not give us enough time to resolve our differences, and so it proved. I believe that we should have worked through the weekend at least.

On the basis of a presidency paper, we met almost continuously from yesterday morning until 7 am today, but failed to reach agreement. A report to that effect was put to the Foreign Affairs Council this morning by the Danish President, and Agriculture Ministers were given one last chance to see whether we could reach agreement. That discussion was resumed this afternoon and has been going on since. I felt it right to come back and report to the House so my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has stayed behind to continue the negotiations from our point of view. I heard a short while ago that those talks have broken up without any further progress and we will be resuming tomorrow evening, following a programme of work to be drawn up by a high level group tomorrow morning. I shall be returning tomorrow, and that is why this debate is so timely.

We have approached the discussions throughout in a constructive spirit, keen to reach conclusions. The talks have been detailed and we have certainly made some progress. However, there are still substantial disagreements and gaps. We continue to seek a successful outcome.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Is the Minister in a position to tell the House which countries are not willing to toe the line?

Mr. MacGregor: We are dealing with some complex matters and there are difficulties for some member states. There are items in the proposals that we do not like. Therefore, I do not wish to cast aspersions on individual member states. The talks are difficult and it is important for the future of the Community that we do everything we can to reach a conclusion, and that is what we are endeavouring to do.

In document 8250 the Commission urges the Council to adopt the package of proposals that it put forward in April on income aids. The aim of the system, as the Commission saw it, was to help those economically and structurally weaker farmers who would otherwise be unable to cope with the pressures put on them by the reform of CAP market regimes. The proposals consist of a part-European Community funded scheme, a nationally funded scheme and a scheme for paying farmers over 55 years of age to give up farming. In our view those proposals are not the best way to provide complementary measures to price restraint, not least because they are at best production-neutral, and there are other criticisms of them. They do not focus on the need to get some land out of production. They have been criticised from all parts of the Council for different reasons. It is now clear that the focus on appropriate complementary measures is moving towards set-aside.

I have made it clear for some time that, given the cereals surpluses, the potential for further increased production, and the impracticability of achieving a reduction in price support sufficient to deal with that problem, complementary measures are necessary. I believe that a set-aside scheme, if we can devise an effective one that can apply across the Community, would be the best option. It would assist with the income pressures on farmers, particularly in marginal cereal areas, and it could have valuable and favourable environmental effects. The United Kingdom took the lead in getting this concept on to the Community agenda. The main focus of Community negotiations in respect of complementary measures in the cereal sector is now on set aside. We have had lengthy discussions, particularly during the past 10 days. As yet, there are no conclusions, so it is not possible to predict the outcome.

However, several important points are emerging. First, the Commission has not yet agreed a set-aside proposal, but it is actively discussing the matter. Secondly, it is likely that, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and interest, the Council of Ministers will decide in principle that a set-aside scheme should be drawn up for implementation in the coming year alongside proposals for cereals stabilisers.

In a sense, we are already committed to producing a set-aside scheme. Under the extensification proposals — another example of Community jargon—agreed earlier this year, every member State must produce a scheme for implementation by 1 April 1988, in the cereal sector, to provide payments for farmers who agree to set aside 20 per cent. of their land for cereals production. I have put a great deal of work into this, with a view to producing a consultative document for the possible United Kingdom scheme, which I had intended to publish next month. We shall have to see what progress is made in these wider set-aside discussions in the next few days, as they may affect this extensification scheme. It is important to draw a distinction between an extensification scheme for cereals, which is limited as I have described, and wider set-aside.

Thirdly, there is still a great uncertainty about the precise elements of a set-aside scheme. Some principles have been put before us in the president's paper which we have been discussing this week and I am concerned that they should not commit us to details which, as the scheme is worked out over the months ahead, we might wish to reject.

However, two points seem to be generally agreed. First, the set-aside scheme would be a complementary measure to the stabiliser proposals and not a substitute for it. That is a point on which we have insisted. Secondly, although it will be compulsory for member states, it will be optional for farmers.

One major development is that the new measures are intended to apply to all arable land. I have made it clear that this must be confined to land which is currently down to crops supported by Community subsidies. It will be crucial to have strong control arrangements to avoid abuse and to ensure that production is not increased elsewhere on the farm.

For the sake of completeness, I must tell the House that we are still considering one of the income aids to deal with early retirement of farmers. That is included in the package. I have made it clear that such a measure should go ahead only when the land comes out of agricultural production. In the original income aid proposals, there were other early retirement schemes for farmers which did not contain that condition.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I am interested to hear that so much serious discussion has taken place about set-aside, but will the Minister tell us whether the idea of a general set-aside has been fully explored? I find it difficult to see how it could be applied only to arable lands. I cannot agree that set-aside and stabilisers are complementary. If we set aside agricultural land, incomes to farmers throughout Europe will decrease and, therefore, producer prices will have to rise. Stabilisers would do exactly the opposite, so they are not complementary.

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point that my hon. Friend raises, I know exactly what he has in mind—the difficult problem which I think will increasingly exercise our minds about the impact on other areas as there is pressure to reduce production in some sectors. As I have just said, this is a point that we shall think about a great deal more over the next 10 years, but the answer is that at present it is not being discussed in the Council because, as I am sure my hon. Friend will recognise, to start having detailed discussions on set-aside for all arable land is a major advance compared with where we were a short time ago. We will have to move in that way.

I also thought it right to report to the House in detail on set-aside because it is an interesting development in the Community. I must repeat that we are still at an early stage and no decision has been taken. I cannot yet say in what shape, when or whether a set-aside scheme will come forward.

On the second point that my hon. Friend made, again I understand why he puts it forward, but he must see that the immediate and urgent need is to contain agricultural expenditure and the explosive growth, for a reason that I will come to. I do not think that set-aside will achieve that quickly enough. So we need stabilisers, for the reasons that I am about to give. On the other hand, I believe that we need this complementary measure. That is why we are working it up to deal with the problems that farmers face as there is downward pressure on incomes and production.

The Community document deals with stabilisers in particular and sets down the specific measures for their introduction into the various commodity regimes. I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if I go through only the most important items, listing briefly the proposal and in each case the United Kingdom position. First I must say what our objectives are on stabilisers. It remains our firm objective in these negotiations that we should secure effective stabilisers. They are in the common interest of farmers, consumers and taxpayers. That means that they must be specific, workable and legally binding, they must apply to the full range of products, they must be fair and non-discriminatory, they must deal with the problems of surpluses and they must bring about greater budgetary discipline.

First, on cereals, despite a number of harvests of less than average size—we are all aware of the problems in many parts of the country on the harvest this year—Community stocks of cereals are still very substantial. About three quarters of the total support expenditure on cereals of about 3·7 billion ecu is spent on export refunds to enable sales on to the world market.

The proposals provide for the introduction of a maximum guaranteed quantity for cereals which, if exceeded, would trigger corrective measures. Under the Commission proposals — the presidency is suggesting some variations — these would involve one or a combination of a price reduction, an increase in co-responsibility levy and a reduction in the intervention period. In the first year, the adjustment to prices and co-responsibility levy would be limited to 5 per cent. and thereafter in second and third years to 7·5 per cent. Both the Commission and the presidency are proposing a figure of 155 million tonnes for the maximum guaranteed quantity for 1988-89.

We are concerned that the limits on the extent to which prices are to be cut when there is over-production are too restrictive, particularly in relation to the limit in the third year. I say clearly that we are also opposed to the use of the co-responsibility levy as one of the corrective measures, but the problem—I must be honest with the House—is that we are very much in a minority in our opposition.

I have already drawn the attention of the House to the fact that production of rapeseed is up 65 per cent. this year. The Commission is putting forward a formula that, if production goes on rising at anything like that extent, would involve significant cuts in price support. There is considerable opposition amongst some member states, but that formula, or something very like it, is essential to effective expenditure stabilisation in this sector, given the current dramatic explosion of production. Even if the new Commission proposal were to be accepted, the support expenditure—the taxpayers' contribution—to the total oilseed sector next year would be 1·9 billion ecu, which is a very substantial advance on where it has been in recent years.

Still on oilseeds, there has been much less discussion of the oils and fats tax in recent days. Our opposition to that proposal remains firm.

For sugar, the Commission proposes the retention of the present arrangements, in particular the continuation of the special elimination levy which is designed to recoup the cost of surplus disposal on an annual basis. There is still a major dispute about where the levy should fall, with a number of member states wishing to see much more of it on A-quota sugar. We believe that the additional levy for recouping the cost of surplus should fall on the B quota. That is right, because the levy should fall on the countries and producers that are responsible for the surpluses. By and large, that is reflected in the B quota. So we have been strongly opposed to those who argue that it should be put on the A quota. I am pleased that so far we have got the Commission and the presidency both in line with our point of view.

On sheep, the documents before the House include both stabiliser proposals and the Commission's review of the regime. We are discussing only the former—stabilisers—in the Council at the moment, so I shall confine myself to them. The proposal is for the establishment of maximum guaranteed levels with proportionate reductions in price support taking effect if the flock size of ewes exceeds the 1987 level. I have been strongly opposed to two aspects of the proposals in this sector. First, the Commission and the presidency are proposing one mechanism for Great Britain and a different one for the rest of the Community. That is clear discrimination and is the only example of it in all the stabiliser measures. I have made it clear on many occasions that it is intolerable.

Secondly, the Commission has again proposed to limit eligibility for premium to the first 500 ewes on each farm or a headage limit of 1,000 in the less-favoured areas. I

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have strongly opposed that, too. I am glad to say that, after many prolonged discussions we are now making headway in getting the Commission and presidency to accept that the proposal is not appropriate in a stabiliser mechanism. I was asked earlier what was causing some of the difficulties. There is a clear difficulty for us.

On milk, as everyone knows, we have had quotas since 1984, and the proposals include both stabiliser elements and a review of milk quotas. The Commission proposes the extension of quotas to 1991, the presidency to 1992, with continuing, but reducing, compensation. In common with the Netherlands, we believe that there should be further restrictions on the compensation measures beyond what the Commission and the presidency are proposing, not least because of the costs, and also because I think that it is a dangerous principle to suggest that farmers should be compensated regularly or continually for having to respond to the disciplines of the market that affect other economic activities.

There are two points not directly related to stabilisers on milk to which I should like to refer because, going round the country, I have found that there is a great deal of interest in them among farmers. The first is the proposal in the documents to have a change in the quota year for milk so that it would end in the August-September period. We have been very much opposed to that, because we think that it would have a very dangerous effect. It would mean that if people were running above their quotas in the trough there would be a further downward pressure on milk production. Therefore, at a time of the year when there is sometimes difficulty in milk supply and distribution, we would run the risk of reinforcing it. I am glad to say that it looks as though that is now coming out of the proposal.

Also, there was a proposal for compulsory national reserves of quota, which is also controversial among farmers and not really supported. Again, it looks as though that will disappear.

There are very major discussions going on on stabiliser proposals for wine and tobacco. In view of the time, I will not go into those in detail. They do not affect our producers; they are important to us as taxpayers, but not as consumers. We are talking about tobacco that nobody in this country smokes, and wine that nobody drinks, but they are important matters to us as taxpayers and therefore they are an important element of this discussion.

Finally, there are still a number of products, mainly Mediterranean products, where the proposals do not seem to us to be effective enough or where they lack precise figures or, indeed, where there are no proposals at all. I refer in particular to olive oil, cotton and rice. We remain of the view that there should be effective stabilisers across the board.

I have, of course, had to leave out a number of commodities because of the time factor, but I hope that I have covered the most essential ones. I would, of course, be happy to deal with any of the others if my hon. Friends or Opposition Members wish me to do so and if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, towards the end of the debate.

I conclude with my remarks on stabilisers because they are at the heart of the debate. Everyone recognises that the current level of surpluses cannot be sustained, not least in the context of world surpluses. Everyone recognises the costs to the taxpayer—I remind the House of the figure. We are currently spending in the Community £12·5 billion a year simply on the storage and disposal of surpluses. That cost to the taxpayer is a gross misuse of resources and does not benefit the consumer.

Everyone subscribes to the view that we need now to make a reality of our rhetoric about stabilising agricultural subsidies. All Ministers know in their hearts that we must correct this continued weakness of the CAP to ensure its future health. The Agriculture Council was asked by the last European Council meeting to take the additional measures necessary to keep the level of agricultural expenditure within the budget framework. It also stated that these measures must ensure that budgetary discipline is fully observed. To settle for sham stabilisers now would help no one. They certainly would not turn the key to success at the Copenhagan summit, which is very much in the interest of the whole Community.

It is important for our farmers, above all, that the stabilisers that we agree to fulfil the mandate that the European Council gave us. I feel strongly that it is not in our farmers' interests for the present uncertainty to continue. It is not in our farmers' interests for us to run the risk of having to take much tougher and unpredictable decisions months and years from now, if the budget blows apart and the money is not there any more because we did not get greater budgetary disciplines into the CAP quickly enough. That is why I ask the House to support the motion and to endorse the Government's objective of securing more effective control now of agricultural expenditure. We do so because, in the concluding words of the motion, it "is in the interests of the farmer, the taxpayer and the consumer."

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I should draw the attention of the House to the fact that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

7.37 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, to leave out from 'aids' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the current expenditure on the Common Agricultural Policy which is currently costing the average household of four persons £11·50 per week is unsupportable; and accepts the concept of meaningful stabilisers as an interim measure to enable the Council of Ministers to work out a suitable means to reduce surpluses and to devise a lasting and rational agricultural policy for the European Community'.

I speak for the whole House when I thank the Minister for taking the trouble to fly from Brussels to brief us on this important issue. I know that I also speak for the House when I say that we doubly appreciate the fact that the Minister has been up all night and has a lot of work still to do.

From his report this evening, it appears that the right hon. Gentleman stood firm, and certainly as long as he stands firm, he will have the support of Opposition Members. I hope that that will give him reassurance and support when he goes back to conclude negotiations on behalf of the farmers, the consumers and the taxpayers of Britain.

Even to the uninitiated, the common agricultural policy is a farce. To those of us who follow the detailed machinations of the CAP, it is a ludicrous and highly expensive farce, and what is more, it is grossly unfair. The documents that we are debating and that the Minister has

discussed with his fellow Agriculture Ministers offer the best opportunity for the EEC to remove this farce once and for all and to replace it with a meaningful and sensible system of agriculture.

Before I go into the precise details of the documents that we are discussing, which are extremely wide-ranging, perhaps it would be helpful to remind ourselves of the cost of the agriculture policy, not only for the United Kingdom, but for Europe as a whole. Only when the true cost of the CAP is realised by the general public will demands for reform become unstoppable.

This year, the total cost of the CAP is a staggering £17·2 billion. I understand that it is proposed that that should be increased, unless we are successful in our reforms, to about £20 billion in the coming year. As we state in our amendment, the cost of the CAP to the average household of four persons in the United Kingdom is £11·50 per week. That is made up of £8·25 on the family food bill and £3·25 in tax. Calculated in another way, that means that, for every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom, we pay £149·50 per year in agricultural support.

Of course, the cost of the common agricultural policy is borne not only by this country but by other member countries, although not to the same extent because it must be remembered that we pay 40 per cent. of the net cost of the CAP. Indeed, it was recently pointed out in Germany that every dairy cow costs the Community £480 in subsidy.

Every person in the Community pays £34 per year for the disposal of surplus food. The overwhelming tragedy is that so much of what we produce is unwanted and unsold. As the Minister rightly said, we currently spend £12 billion on the storing and disposal of surplus food. That is two thirds of the total EEC agriculture budget and, staggeringly, half of the overall EEC budget. Those are not my figures, but the Government's and were put forward recently by the Foreign Secretary in a powerful address in Bonn. There is no dispute in the House about the cost of the CAP.

The fact that we spend so much on surpluses, storage and disposal means that nowadays farmers are not the sole beneficiaries of the CAP. The main gainers are those who run the intervention stores and arrange for the disposal of surpluses. We maintain that that is ridiculous. To make matters worse, we not only pay through the nose to produce the surpluses but then threaten to wreck the economies of many Third world agriculture producers by dumping our surpluses on the world market. We believe that that is unsustainable.

To go further, many of us find it ironic that we in the West pay large sums of money to support the CAP to ensure that any territorial ambitions of Warsaw pact countries are dissuaded, but at the same time we sustain their populations by selling them our surplus agricultural produce at knockdown prices. Last year, the European Commission sold more than 7 million tonnes of cereals to the Soviet Union at subsidised prices of £30 to £40 per tonne, whereas the intervention price for wheat in the United Kingdom in 1986-87 was £112. Similarly, European consumers paid more than £1 per pound for butter but the Soviets ate the same butter for 38p per pound. Therefore, we are not only providing Soviet citizens with bread, but are giving them the butter to put on it. That is completely ridiculous.

The CAP has been a failure in another sense. One prime objective of the treaty of Rome was to retain employment in agriculture and in rural areas, but it has manifestly failed to do so. In the 25 years since 1960, agricultural employment in the nine longest-standing EEC member countries fell from 17 million to 7 million. In Britain alone, last year 13,000 jobs were lost in rural areas, mainly in agriculture. That is a terrible price to pay, but the position could be even more serious than that.

A recent study of the wider effects of the common agricultural policy by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Centre of International Economics at Canberra suggested that 1 million jobs have been lost in other sectors of the European economy because of the common agricultural policy. In Britain alone, academics estimate that 450 jobs have been lost as a result of the CAP.

It is claimed that, overall, the CAP has reduced Britain's manufacturing output by 2·5 per cent., its services output by 3·1 per cent. and the total real income of the citizens of this country by 0·6 per cent. In essence, the experts are arguing that the removal of that £11·50 per week from each family budget reduces the opportunity cost of purchasing services and manufactured goods and, in turn, causes job losses. Furthermore, the £7 billion, which is the full cost to Britain of the CAP each year, has been diverted from more promising investment in manufacturing and servicing, thus adding to the job losses that I have already outlined.

I hope that the facts that I have given the House this evening show why the Labour party believes in the need for a fundamentally different approach to agriculture in the Common Market. It is reassuring that, at long last, our criticisms of the CAP have been recognised, not only by the Government but by increasing numbers of people in Europe. I only hope that those people, to whom the Minister rightly referred, are sincere in their realisation of what is achievable, because in Strasbourg last week I experienced fine rhetoric but little real determination to tackle the problems when national interests are at stake.

However, at least proposals are now before the Commission and the Council of Ministers which, however inadequate, state that something is fundamentally wrong and recognise that a change of direction is needed. As the Minister quite fairly elaborated, the chosen means that the Commission, and apparently the majority of member Governments, favour for tackling the problem is that of stabilisers. However, stabilisers are just another piece of European jargon which confuse the poor taxpayer. In essence, they are merely a mechanism that is designed automatically to reduce prices to farmers when production exceeds a certain level. In other words, they would in theory put a cap on agricultural expenditure.

It seems to us that that objective is correct. If stabilisers are not only a real mechanism to reduce the surpluses that are already in store, but also a meaningful way to reduce the production that has led to those surpluses, they have the support of the Labour party. However, many of us are still sceptical, and suspect that some of the Minister's European colleagues still regard stabilisers as merely cosmetic, to make the CAP more attractive to the consumer. There is a basic difference of approach, and we cannot accept the approach of those who argue for stabilisers as cosmetics. As the Minister stated, they must be real and effective.

I would be grateful if the Minister could give us some further information regarding the Government's position on stabilisers. On 13 November, in an article in *Farmers Weekly*, the Minister said that, although he had some

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particular difficulties with some aspects of stabilisers, he supported their approach and believed that they meant a better chance of stability. In essence, he has repeated that sentiment today. Such sentiments were expressed by the Foreign Secretary in Bonn when he said in praise of the new proposals:

"quotas have enabled milk producers to plan their production. Stabilisers for other commodities, adapted for each production regime will do the same."

The Government appear to have faith in stabilisers.

However, we were all a little disconcerted — I was rather surprised that the Minister did not dwell on it — that the Prime Minister appears to have a novel idea. In the *Financial Times* on 23 November, she is reported as saying that she can support the system of stabilisers only if they are adopted in an enforceable way. Those sentiments have the support of the Labour Party. Her favoured scheme — we are led to believe that she put it to Mr. Chirac on 22 November — is what she calls the "clean slate approach". She described this approach very precisely:

"Each of you agrees on your national budget to take and accept the responsibility of a clean slate. Each of you writes down what we have got and takes responsibility for disposing of it without the writing down or costs of the disposal coming on to the CAP."

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will mention that complementary approach — that is how I see it — to stabilisers. The general theoretical approach adopted by the Prime Minister has merit in that it is a step towards the repatriation of a certain amount of agricultural responsibility to member nations. That has long been argued by the Labour Party and repeatedly advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), my predecessor as Labour's agricultural spokesman.

The Prime Minister's proposals raise many issues that need to be answered. I wonder whether the Minister can tell us how his fellow Agriculture Ministers have reacted. Were any nations prepared to support us and, if so, which ones? I wonder whether the Minister can advise us what the total cost of the clean slate scheme would be to the United Kingdom. I understand that, globally within the EEC, the cost would be something between £4 billion and £5 billion. I would be interested to know how the Prime Minister costed the clean slate approach for Britain. I am certain that, as a result of the thoroughness with which the Prime Minister goes into these schemes, she knows the precise cost to Britain. It would be extemely helpful to the House to know the details of that particular scheme.

How does the Prime Minister envisage each nation disposing of its surplus stocks? Does the Prime Minister appreciate there would be deep resentment on Opposition Benches and, I trust, on Conservative Benches, if stocks were simply dumped on the Third world. We have wreaked enough havoc in their economies. There are all sorts of difficulties and I would be grateful if the Minister could help by explaining some of the Prime Minister's novel approaches to solving some of the problems.

I am prepared to give conditional support to stabilisers as long as they are effective, but primarily we recognise them as a budgetary device. In practical farming terms, stabilisers have at least two major shortcomings. First, we know that farmers need to plan ahead. I believe that the present proposals for stabilisers would not persuade many farmers to cut production in the short term. Indeed, it would be nearly impossible for them to do so, because much of the seed for the coming year is already in the ground. Secondly, my fear is that the reaction of many farmers will simply be to increase production, to reduce their unit costs and to maximise their income. That is a particular problem in cereal farming — the Minister paid much attention to that problem.

Therefore, the Labour Party firmly believes that stabilisers are not the panacea for the CAP, but can only be part of an armoury of weapons to attack the problem of over-production and accompanying surpluses.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): It has been generally agreed by many farmers that the quota system has been beneficial. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a third disadvantage with the stabiliser system regarding farmers in the less-favoured areas? The application of across-the-board stabilisers would be disadvantageous to those farmers' interests. Does he agree that there is a case for looking at a variable application of a quota system within the EEC?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Member has raised a pertinent issue regarding income support for farmers in the upland areas and I shall consider that important matter later in my speech.

Let us consider a number of the proposals. We appreciate that sugar is perhaps one of the most sensitive regimes in the EEC. The Community is a massive over-producer of sugar, and we have a major impact on the world market. Furthermore, the Opposition — I must get this on record — are extremely conscious of our commitment to the developing nations and our agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Therefore, the Labour Party broadly supports the proposals to retain the current sugarbeet quotas in the United Kingdom and trust that the Government will ensure that the margins for the sugar cane refiners are sufficient for them to handle the ACP production. We believe that that is extremely important for both branches of sugar production.

Milk is an agricultural regime in which there has already been a serious attempt to tackle over-production, and with some success. We were extremely critical — I believe rightly so — of the way in which quotas were initially administered, but basically we support the concept. The manner in which the quota system has been applied on a national basis makes sense in Britain, where the Milk Marketing Board has an effective distribution network. However, we are aware that serious difficulties have occurred in the uniform supply of milk, with the result that various creameries and cheese-making plants have been forced to close.

Only this week, the Dairy Crest creamery in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) had to stop production temporarily. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has, on a number of occasions, drawn the attention of the House and myself to the position of the cheese-making plant on the Isle of Arran. I do not need to spell out the irony of the difficulties experienced in Caerphilly regarding cheese making. However, I understand that cheese production is now going ahead in Caerphilly.

I believe that it should be possible for the Milk Marketing Board, the National Farmers Union, the

producers and the Ministry to get together to solve that particular problem. It is absolutely ludicrous that jobs are lost in areas where, often, there are no alternative jobs and milk is available. I urge the Minister to pay particular attention to the matter and try to do something to solve it—it may be solved even within the present regime. We support the present regime for milk quotas. We go further, because we believe that it should be extended for a further five years so that confidence can be built up in the dairy market and so that farmers can plan accordingly. We believe that that is a sensible approach.

Although we have endorsed milk quotas, we cannot, in any way, endorse the stabiliser proposal for sheepmeat. Indeed, the stabiliser proposal that causes us most concern is that for sheepmeat. We are conscious of the fact that sheep farming takes place on the lowlands as well as the uplands. We are also conscious that any set-aside scheme that would have the effect of moving sheep from the uplands to the lowlands would cause serious difficulties. I know that the Minister is aware of that and I hope he will take cognisance of it.

We are especially concerned about the upland areas, to which the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) rightly drew my attention. The upland farmers have benefited least from the common agricultural policy, and it is imperative that they are not penalised further. A recent letter in *Farmers Weekly* pointed out that some uplands farmers are on family income supplement, and that was confirmed in the answer to a parliamentary question that I tabled the other day.

We must ensure that the farmers who have done least well, and who often perform a very effective job for us, are not penalised. It should also be taken into account that many of the areas that they farm are greatly valued for their scenic and wildlife attractions, which they play a vital role in maintaining. I hope that the Minister will not completely rule out the notion of direct income support, although I note what he said, and I realise that he is in a negotiating position.

Let me return to the subject of sheepmeat, in which neither the United Kingdom nor the European Community is self-sufficient. We feel strongly that the attempt by British farmers, in particular, to meet the market requirements should not be penalised. The Minister has clearly said that there is straightforward, open discrimination against British sheep farmers in the stabiliser proposals. That discrimination must be resisted. I understand that, if stabilisers were applied, a reduction of roughly 7 per cent. in the income of sheep farmers would be required. The variable premium has allowed British farmers to produce lamb that has reached the market at high quality, and minimised the fluctuation of supply. That should be supported, rather than being phased out.

It is widely recognised on both sides of the House that cereal farmers, especially those farming extensively in eastern England, have been the principal beneficiaries of the common agricultural policy. They have also been the main destroyers of our countryside. It is they who have grubbed up the hedgerows, and who are applying the nitrogenised fertilisers which are storing up an environmental time bomb for the future. We can support, as an interim measure, the Commission's proposal for a production ceiling of 155 million tonnes throughout Europe. However, we are sceptical about the effect of any stabilisers in that sphere.

It is all too easy for farmers simply to maximise production, and thus maintain their profits in spite of the lower overall unit support. We appreciate that the large cereal farmers have had to capitalise very heavily, and we realise the pressures on them to follow that course. But we feel that there should be additional limits in the regime, certainly positive set-aside and probably compulsory; indeed, quotas may be necessary. As the Minister has pointed out, rapeseed production this year has increased by about 70 per cent. throughout Europe, in spite of considerable price reductions offered to the growers. That emphasises, if not proves, my point.

Can the Minister tell the House whether the global sum of 155 million, 160 million or 165 million tonnes will be broken down into national allocations? If not, what account has been taken of the variations in weather conditions between different nations? Weather conditions are often critical to the harvesting, as well as the growing, of cereal. For example, in 1986 a drought caused considerable difficulties in Spain, while we in northern Europe were able to produce a fairly good harvest.

I was pleased to hear the Minister say that there has been no real suggestion that the oil and fats tax will be introduced, and that the Government are opposed to it. The Labour party is utterly opposed to such an approach, and will support the Government in their opposition. As I am sure the Minister appreciates, the tax would put up the price of some margarines by nearly 60 per cent., and penalise the less well off members of our society. It would also be an added deterrent to those who are attempting to follow a more healthy diet.

Mr. MacGregor: For the sake of clarity, let me explain that, while we are absolutely opposed to the oil and fats tax, I did not say that it was being permanently excluded from the discussions. I said that it had not featured much in them recently. The proposal is still firmly established in the case of many other member states, although we remain opposed to it.

Dr. Clark: I thank the Minister for clarifying that point. I hope that he will return to fight the battle in the knowledge that he has the full support of every Opposition Member in opposing this particularly pernicious proposal.

Another document that we are discussing this evening deals with income aids, pre-pensions and the cessation of farming. This is an important aspect of the proposals for tackling agricultural problems in the years ahead. While I appreciate that these proposals are at an early stage of negotiation within the Commission, I wonder whether the Minister could deal with one or two points that arise from them.

I question the very concept of the proposals for the cessation of farming, as applied to Britain. Surely the objective should be to remove land from cultivation, and thus reduce surpluses, rather than removing farmers and farm workers from the population. Those of us who appreciate the beauty of the British countryside realise that much of it is the result of the work of farmers over many generations. We do not believe in a denuded countryside; we believe in a living countryside.

In some of the most scenic areas, we need the farmer working the land to retain the beauty and character that we appreciate so much, as well as retaining the viable rural communities with their schools, public transport and cottage hospitals. We reject the idea of encouraging people

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to leave the land. That problem may have to be faced where there are very small units of production, but it is not a problem for us in the United Kingdom, and I hope that the Minister will not show much enthusiasm for such an approach.

If, however, an EC-wide scheme is agreed, will the Minister give the House a categorical assurance that not only farmers will be the beneficiaries, and that it will be remembered that agricultural workers may lose their jobs as well? They have been forgotten so often in the past. The Commission's proposals specifically mention that the cessation of farming is permissible, and I hope that the Minister will press the issue if he is forced to follow that route.

The Minister mentioned the environmentally sensitive areas scheme: indeed, he claimed that he was present when the notion was discussed here. I believe that it was originally discussed early in 1985, when we were discussing the Private Member's Bill that became the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, when we accepted the concept of paying farmers to farm in an environmentally sensitive manner, as is right and proper. We believe that there is considerable scope for not only increasing the number of ESAs, but also extending the concept to devise new and varied ways of supporting farmers who are prepared to follow low-imput farming practices. That would have the dual benefit of reducing production and making farming less harmful to the environment.

The idea can be extended further. Has the Minister considered the possibility of taking land out of production for longer than he is suggesting, to allow for the creation of new wildlife habitats and recreational areas? Bearing in mind the decimation that our countryside has suffered over the past 40 years from intensive agricultural practices, with a shift towards extensification, we now have a tremendous opportunity for redressing the balance between producing food on the one hand and farming in a more environmentally acceptable manner on the other.

The Agriculture Act 1986 requires the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

"to . . . endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the . . . maintenance of a stable and efficient agricultural industry; the economic and social interests of rural areas; the conservation and enhancement of the . . . countryside . . . and the promotion of the enjoyment of the countryside by the public."

That is enshrined in statute and I hope that the Minister will take all that into account when he is devising his set-aside scheme.

We note that the Commission is devising a set-aside scheme which, as I understand it, is rather separate from the specific Government proposal on cereal set-aside. Would that effect the Government's proposal under their farm woodlands scheme, which is currently in another place?

The key to a set-aside plan is rather different from the Government's view. The Government seem to be following the path of a voluntary scheme and the Opposition are sceptical about the effectiveness of that voluntary approach. We are more inclined to the NFU's view that, for the scheme to be effective, it must be compulsory.

As I have said, the Community now has a tremendous opportunity fundamentally to reform the CAP. For too long, the interests of the consumer have been ignored, although the consumer has paid heavily for the CAP. Michel Jacquot, the agricultural adviser to the President of the EC, recently said:

"European consumers must make their contribution to the support of the European producers."

The Opposition believe that the reverse is the case and the European producers have now to make their contribution towards the European consumers.

8.11 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): It is with some diffidence that I re-enter agriculture debates in the House after a period of absence. None the less, I assure my hon. Friends that during that time I did not entirely lose interest in, or concern for, what has been happening in the industry.

I confess, perhaps somewhat wryly, that, when I hear the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) rightly complimenting my right hon. Friend the Minister on his fortitude in coming to the House to speak at both ends of a debate in the middle of negotiations, I can probably express sympathy with more feeling from actual experience. I join in complimenting my right hon. Friend not only on coming to the House but also on speaking with clarity and pointing out to us where the priorities lie in the crucial few days ahead.

We must remember that we are debating the CAP's future—my right hon. Friend touched on this—in the context of the present negotiations in the summit, but also against the background of the serious economic situation of British agriculture. I know that my right hon. Friend recognises that, and the House must also do so and make sure that that is put on the record on an occasion such as this.

The industry faces a difficult time economically, and has done so for several years. In some parts of Scotland, and in other parts of the United Kingdom as well, there has been an extremely bad harvest and I hope that in his negotiations my right hon. Friend will keep in mind the impact of that on ordinary average farmers, particularly those in the more difficult parts of the United Kingdom who are facing real problems.

I do not want to burden my right hon. Friend with problems that he knows and understands, but, in my part of Scotland, the North-East of Scotland college of agriculture has shown from a recent survey that more than half the farmers in the Grampian region of Scotland will not make a profit this year. We must also remember that that is against the background of a bad harvest in 1985, when 40 per cent. of farmers in that region also failed to make a profit and when 14 per cent. failed to make a profit last year.

One of the significant points to emerge from that survey is that many farms are surviving only as a result of the injection of outside cash. Perhaps I may wryly describe that as forced diversification. Often a wife takes another job or a part-time job or money is brought in from elsewhere. Therefore, there has been diversification, often as a result of necessity.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The right hon. Gentleman and I share similar concerns about the Grampian region and I am sure that he was as concerned as I was to read the report in yesterday's Aberdeen *Evening Express* that the National Australia bank is refusing to accept many

farmers' financial problems and to honour some of the debts involved. It reports that about five farmers in the north-east of Scotland have committed suicide because of their financial problems. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, like me, would ask the Minister, whom we greatly respect, to have discussions with those of his colleagues who deal with financial matters to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to enable our farmers to face their financial difficulties and to move forward with confidence.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Lady is drawing attention to a particular difficulty which has arisen because of the changes in banking groups. I hope that the Midland bank will deal sensitively with such matters, and that is a factor which needs to be taken into account. I rely not only on reports from colleges or anybody else, as my right hon. Friend knows, but on my first-hand experience and meetings with farmers and the NFU in the past 10 days.

I am grateful to my noble Friend Lord Sanderson for his visit to the north-east of Scotland, which shows the Government's understanding of the situation. I am also grateful to my right hon. Friend for his visit to Edinburgh on Friday, which the NFU of Scotland greatly appreciated.

We always come back, as my right hon. Friend did, to the fundamental problem of surplus. No one in the House or, indeed, in the industry—I compliment the industry on its responsible attitude towards the problem and its appreciation of the difficulties—would deny that we must tackle that problem. None the less, we must keep the matter in perspective.

It is always prudent, and it is in the interests of good housekeeping, to have some surplus for a rainy day. It is worth remembering that stocks are declining. As my right hon. Friend pointed out, if measures had not been taken, for example, on skimmed milk and butter since 1984, we would have been spending about £5 billion a year more. Therefore, progress has been made. The policy has not been a failure. The hon. Member for South Shields should talk to farmers in Europe to see how that has helped the standard of living in the countryside in Europe. There have been successes in that policy.

We must also remember that other countries, such as the United States, Japan and even Norway, to take one of the Scandinavian countries, support agriculture. Europe is not unique in supporting agriculture. I say that particularly to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), with whom I have debated this matter on many occasions. It is wrong to choose the CAP as an Aunt Sally to attack the concept of Europe, because as recent OECD and World bank studies have pointed out, many other areas support agriculture to an even greater extent than does Europe.

However, that does not help us to get away from the problems facing Europe in dealing with the surplus. We must make sure that other countries put their houses in order at the same time as us; otherwise we shall not achieve what we are seeking. I understand the policy that my right hon. Friend proposes to follow. Stabilisers relate the price to over-production. They bring home the message of what over-production means, and they influence farmers' decisions.

Turning to the point of the motion this evening, I hope that my right hon. Friend will keep the interests of farmers in mind. They will not put up with any sense of unfairness. We must ensure that anything that is applied to control the surplus is applied fairly. Some of what happened with the green pound last year—it is rising again a little now—left farmers with a genuine sense of unfairness.

I hope that, in relation to the green pound or anything else, my right hon. Friend will ensure fairness throughout. I understand the frustrations that he must feel in the negotiations because he is seeking a solution that deals with some of the roots of the problem. Some countries, such as Germany and France, dwell far too much on the immediate political domestic issues, without dealing with the real problems that face the Community. They should pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for approaching the subject on a Communitywide basis, which is what Britain is trying to do in order to get to the root of the problems.

Equally, I say to my right hon. Friend that, despite our obsession with the budgetary problems—we are right to be obsessed with them domestically—for the sake of credibility we must keep in mind the longer-term problem of reducing the surplus. Merely solving the budget without dealing with surplus production will not properly and effectively reform the CAP.

I have three matters of concern. My first concern is that it is important to maintain a distinction, when attempting to reduce the surpluses, between price policy such as stabilisers, and other methods of policy such as production controls, extensification and so on. Here I refer to what my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) said earlier. Many farmers embraced milk quotas; they thought that, on the basis of the Canadian experience, there would be an improvement in price, but that has not happened. With the withdrawal of intervention from skimmed milk, and more restrictions on butter, a double policy has been applied — a production control in quotas, and price measures biting through changes in the intervention systems.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that stabilisers and all the other measures are complementary. He is right to use both types of measure, but it is important, when setting them out, to define which ones are for what purposes, so that farmers know what is happening and their expectations are not raised and then dashed. I know that my right hon. Friend will see to that, as he has done in the past.

Second, among a range of other measures, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) referred to income support. That is helpful and necessary in a period of adjustment. A number of suggestions have been made, such as alternative occupations and diversification grants of one sort or another for which, in Scotland, my noble Friend announced a £3 million injection. However, those grants provide only about 25 per cent. of what farmers may have to invest—they have to find the other 75 per cent.

Those farmers are in areas that are strapped for income anyway. Where will they find the 75 per cent. to take advantage of the diversification programmes that my right hon. Friend has mentioned? Do farmers have the necessary business skills or experience for other occupations? They must be careful about going into some of the schemes, because they could burn their fingers. Advice and help should be given as part of those schemes at a time when—to be slightly cynical—the Government

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

are withdrawing a lot of free advice to farmers. If my right hon. Friend is serious about trying to help, there must be more positive financial and advisory support.

Third, the concept of alternative uses for land — extensification — is not an easy panacea. Forestry or other uses for land require new skills and forms of management that not every farmer will have. I question whether the level of grants is high enough. The cereal price must be below £95 a tonne to make the grants a worthwhile incentive to take good land into forestry.

As regards set-aside, I say: watch carefully the experience of the United States. Set-aside was not the success that many have claimed. Production did not fall in the same proportion. Fifty-five per cent. of the benefit went to about 10 per cent. of the farmers. At the end of the day, we come to the crucial problem of what I call re-entry. We still have that problem for quotas on milk, and no one has tackled it yet. We keep putting off the day when quotas may come to an end, and what do we do then? Quotas were introduced with no thought for the problems of re-entry. Similarly, I urge my right hon. Friend to recognise the problem of re-entry if set-aside is adopted. What do we do when the policy ends, and what will happen to the land then?

It is important in a debate such as this to explain what direction I believe we should go in. Many of the proposed measures are good, but my right hon. Friend and the House will realise that I feel they should be better directed and co-ordinated. Ultimately, we must reduce surplus and simplify the whole matter. To reduce surplus we must take good — not just marginal — land wholly out of production. That is the only way in which to reduce surpluses and it is why set-aside is not the answer that many believe it to be.

We must seriously examine how to take more good land out of production. At the Oxford farming conference in January this year, Maitland Wackie from Aberdeenshire made a speech on those lines. Many people ridiculed it in the press and subsequently, which was wrong of them. I urge my right hon. Friend to take that speech and read it again. If we could take more good land out of production, particularly around our cities, where it can be used in an extensive way for recreational and other purposes, that would deal effectively with the heart of the problem rather than only its manifestations.

There are political objections — but what could be more Socialist or interventionist than the present quota system? On this point, I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for South Shields; if we are to have set-aside, we should seriously consider making it compulsory if it is to be effective, and not rely on a voluntary scheme.

To simplify: putting a capital sum into bringing land out of production could yield great savings in revenue in future years. If, for instance, across Europe we agreed to spend £5 billion a year for several years to take good land right out of production, which is roughly a third of the CAP budget now, and if that good land were valued at £1,000-plus an acre, each year we could take about 4 to 5 million acres of land out of production. Set against that the cereal surplus, which is equivalent to 5 million to 7 million acres, and we have the germ of an idea — although I admit the figures may be simplistic. Nevertheless, I believe that the idea should be examined.

My right hon. Friend is tackling these problems much nearer the source than we have done in the past. I wish him well in the negotiations, and I beg him not to lose sight of the ultimate objectives—reducing production, being fair to British farmers and, by not using a broad range of measures and firing a lot of shot in the hope that some will hit the target, dealing with the fundamentals and not only the manifestations of the problem. I wish him luck.

8.29 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): We are well aware that the young Minister is sincere in his deliberations. He is convincing at times and very persuasive in his approach. I thank him for coming back from Brussels to open this debate and, I hope, to make the winding-up speech. I hope that he will be enlightened by the comments of hon. Members and I wish him the best in his negotiations on his arrival back in Brussels. I am sure that he will agree that British farmers cannot be blamed for feeling that their industry is under siege.

In its determination to reduce surpluses and bring spending under control, in the past few years the EC has taken measures that have had a tremendous effect on British farmers. Those measures have rocked the agricultural establishment to its foundations. Agriculture has always prided itself on its efficiency and has tried to respond to the Government's encouragement to produce sufficient food from our own resources. It is now faced with penalties and by now most farmers have had to come to terms with a seriously reduced income. For many farmers it is now more a matter of survival than of making any kind of decent living. For many small producers—I include many Welsh farmers in that category — continuing decline will mean the end of the road for many, not only in Wales but in other parts of Britain.

In my discussions with the farming unions, I have found agreement that the weakening of support for the livestock sector will have a serious effect in hill farming areas. As a Welshman, that matter is of special concern to me. It is right that there should be some rationalisation of the present situation where production far exceeds demand, but my worry is that solutions not suited to British needs will be hurried through without enough thought for the consequences to the industry and to the rural communities that it supports. For example, I wonder whether enough consideration has been given to marketing and to reducing stores in intervention by using them to help the Third world.

I hope that in his wisdom the Minister will persuade the Leader of the House and others to have a debate on the intervention system and on the marketing of surpluses in the Community. We have not debated those topics for at least 10 years. If we improved our marketing from within the Community, we would not have the surpluses in many commodities that we have today.

Hon. Members were talking about beef in intervention. The amount of beef in British intervention stores has remained at about 52,000 tonnes each month this year, and the level has varied only slightly from month to month. The intervention people at Reading told me that all the beef in British intervention stocks is home-produced and of good quality. If we had done away with some of the intervention schemes that we have in Britain, all that beef would have been eaten by British consumers. We have been hoarding beef and other commodities for far too long

in the Community. I hope that we will have an opportunity to debate marketing, surpluses and the needs of the Third world in the near future.

I know that it is fashionable in a debate of this kind to criticise and deride the common agricultural policy. Hon. Members have made much of the excess expenditure on agriculture and have produced all kinds of statistics to underline their long-cherished prejudices. They give a distorted picture of the industry and of the effect of the common agricultural policy on our total national budget. Therefore, I feel perfectly justified in quoting some statistics that hon. Members may have read some time ago in the *Farmers Weekly*. Those statistics put the whole thing into the correct perspective.

One interesting quote says:

"The UK spends about £16 bn a year on education".

There is nothing wrong with that. It goes on to say that we spend

"£18 bn on defence".

That is debatable and arguable. It says that each year we spend

"£44·5 bn on social security".

I wonder whether that is due to Government policies that have led to a high level of unemployment. The quote says that we spend

"just £2·2 bn on the CAP."

For that amount, the whole of Britain is sure of being fed.

I agree that the common agricultural policy must be reformed, but it must not be abolished or destroyed in the near future. America spends £6,500 in support for each of its farmers, in Japan, the amount is £2,400 but in the United Kingdom it is only £1,366. To put it another way, the United States pays out on agriculture £72 for every man, woman and child in the population; Japan pays £79 per person and the EC stumps up only £45 a head. I agree with the conclusion of the *Farmers' Weekly* that £45 a head is a price worth paying for a stable supply of food, employment for 10·6 million farmers within the Community, and support for a way of life that protects the environment and gives support to the rural community.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): There is a fallacy in those figures in the *Farmers' Weekly*. They take no account of the indirect support from import levies, and the European Commission says that that is worth £3,000 million.

Mr. Howells: I take heed of what the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) says. I know that he is an anti-Community man, but I admire the way in which he advances his point of view, and I respect what he has just said.

The Prime Minister is selling Britain's farming short when she attacks agricultural expenditure in the way she does. Her insistence on seeing a restriction placed on farm spending before any budget agreement could well lead to another crisis in British farming. I seriously question her intentions towards one of the most efficient industries in Britain. I fear that the imposition of the stabilisers, applied without efficient consideration, could easily disrupt the industry, without producing any beneficial effects. They are designed to drive farmers or producers out of business by drastic price cuts. No one can deny that that will inevitably lead to a depression in land values.

As the National Farmers Union correctly pointed out, this will encourage farmers still in business to purchase any land that becomes free and to continue to farm it at a lower level of fixed costs. Production will continue at the same level, the measures will not have the desired effect, and many farmers will have suffered in the process.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman says that the proposals are for drastic price cuts. Can he tell me where in the papers that are before us there is any evidence whatever of drastic price cuts?

Mr. Howells: The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) will have to wait for only a few months to find out what the cuts are. I hope that the set-aside scheme mentioned by the Minister will be sucessful. I wish him well in his negotiations. The only two ways in which we can improve matters, apart from marketing, are to pay farmers for what they produce or to pay them for not producing. The set-aside scheme could prove workable and I hope that that will be the case in the years to come.

I am a sheep producer and I know that many sheep producers in various parts of Britain are delighted to hear the Minister's news. Many sheep farmers are worried that, unless grain growers' land is set aside, many more sheep will rear lambs in the lowlands and on the east coast. I believe that that is a step in the right direction.

We are fortunate that we have had a deficiency payments system for sheep for the past 40 years. Whatever views we hold, it has been successful and has returned a reasonable income to both lowland and hill farmers. I hope that the Minister, in his wisdom, will ensure that we retain that system. The only advantage that the annual premium system would appear to have for British sheepmeat producers is that, in the absence of a variable premium, there could be no clawback on sheepmeat exports to the continent and that the export trade would flourish, given unhindered access to markets such as France. Will the Minister give an assurance that French farmers are willing to abolish the clawback at the negotiations? I doubt that very much. If they are not, I ask the Minister not to give in to French requests.

I am also concerned about the suggestions and proposals to limit the payment of the annual ewe premium for the first 500 ewes on lowland farms and for the first 1,000 ewes on holdings in less-favoured areas. I know that the Minister will stand up to his counterparts in Europe and ensure that that clause is not agreed.

It is accepted that the United Kingdom has been a major beneficiary of the regime and that until recently the vast proportion of expenditure under the sheepmeat regime has been paid to the United Kingdom. Rightly so, as there are many more sheep in Britain than in other parts of Europe. The United Kingdom has by large the largest national flock to support. The percentage of support expenditure to the United Kingdom is declining. It must be put in perspective. In 1981, 97 per cent. of the sheepmeat regime expenditure was to the United Kingdom. By 1985, that had declined to just over 70 per cent. With the entry of Spain and Portugal into the Community, it is estimated that the level of expenditure to the United Kingdom will continue to decrease to around 40 per cent. That is a step in the right direction.

Were it not for the sheep industry, vast tracts of the hill and upland areas would become further depopulated and seasonal employment opportunities would greatly diminish. I hope that the Minister will heed the views of the Secretary of State for Wales, who is responsible for Welsh agriculture and who is in favour of retaining the

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present sheepmeat regime. I hope that the Minister will be able to persuade others within the Community to continue with the present scheme. Is the Minister in favour of retaining the sheepmeat regime in its entirety?

After what we have heard tonight, I also hope that the Minister will give an assurance to farmers that their incomes will improve during the next 12 months. Finally, what are the Minister's views and plans to try to curb the intervention system?

8.43 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Madam Deputy Speaker, I only want to cover some aspects of what the Minister has drawn to the attention of the House in his speech tonight. I preface that by saying how grateful I am as well that he has come back to the House, after extremely arduous negotiations, to open, listen to and conclude this debate. May I also say how much I appreciate the fact that, shortly after taking office, he made time to see representatives of Devon NFU, the largest county branch in England. That was greatly appreciated too.

The warning that I want to share with the House and with my right hon. Friend is a serious warning against believing that one changes cause and effect by giving something a different name. I was elected in 1960, and in the early 1960s we saw the utter failure of the policy which was described as a "standard quantity" policy. I have been unable to discern, but I would be grateful if my right hon. Friend can illuminate, any essential difference between the "standard quantity" policy which was such a failure in the early 1960s, and the "stabiliser" policy which is now to save us all from financial destruction. The essential fallacy of the standard quantity system was this: it did not bite at the individual producer and it was still advantageous to the individual producer to beggar his neighbour by increasing his output.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): There is no deficiency payment in a stabilised system. There was a deficiency payment in the central part of the old standard quantity.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: No, the essential of the standard quantity system was not a deficiency payment. The essential ingredient of it was that the payments should decrease once a standard quantity had been exceeded. That was the essential. That there was a deficiency payment system is true whether or not one has standard quantities. Standard quantities were a quite separate item of policy, free-standing on their own. They did not depend for their existence on a deficiency payment system, nor does the stabiliser system, as it is now called, depend on the deficiency payment system, because it is not there. They are both, as I understand it, the same, and they do not depend on the deficiency payment system.

The problem is this: where one has a standard quantity system—and let us call it that because that is what it is—one is endeavouring to contain expenditure without containing output, because it still pays the individual producer to spread his costs over a greater number of units. That is the fallacy of it. It only reduces production at the moment when individual producers become insolvent and go out of business and nobody else takes over their productive resources and continues to produce the same commodity from them. That is the fallacy of the standard quantity system. Do we have to suffer the disaster of learning the same lesson over again? This country, and now the EEC, ought to be able to have a long enough memory to remember when systems have demonstrably failed and why they demonstrably failed.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) finished his speech from the Opposition Dispatch Box almost with a throwaway line by saying that, of course, at the end of the day we may have to come to quotas. Well, if we are going to come to quotas, why leave it until the end of the day? There has been a considerable success with the milk quotas. But how much greater a success it would have been if they had been brought in when some of us, myself included, were recommending them in the late 1970s, when producers could have had a quota of more than 100 per cent., and when the introduction of quotas would not then have produced disaster for those who were in the middle of expansion schemes, having committed the capital but being unable to generate the output, because of the truncation of that expansion, to service the capital that had been invested in it.

No, if the logic of events and the message of experience is that only a quota system can contain budgetary costs — which is one objective — sustain producer incomes rather than the incomes of those who are storing excess products—that is the second one—and thirdly prevent gross disruption of the sole source of income of many Third-world countries — I think that that is a third objective which we ought to sustain—if the lesson of experience and the logic of events is that, why wait until we are into even grosser over-supply before introducing quotas? They do not become easier to introduce by postponing the moment. If we have learnt nothing else from milk quotas from the fact that they do achieve their objectives, it is surely the earlier the better, not the later the better.

The other lesson that we surely ought to have learned is that, once one has put quotas on one type of output, it will have a knock-on effect into others. First we saw it from milk into beef. Then, when the profitability of beef was virtually nothing, as far as possible a knock-on into lamb for those who could. Britain will soon be self-sufficient in sheepmeat.

What then? Where do we go from there? Is it not readily observable that the price for pig products and the price for chicken meat is the resultant of the prices for prime red meat? When those are depressed, there is depression in the chicken market and depression in the pig market. Unless when introducing one quota which is thoroughly justified by its results, as anticipated, one rapidly spreads that system before there are destructive knock-on effects, one will make it ever more difficult to introduce quotas—although to quote the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), at the end of the day it may be necessary. I would say at the end of the day it will be necessary.

There is one final word I want to leave on this subject. When it is perceived by many, if not by all, that quotas are inevitable, what happens? We have a cascade of extra production to provide the most favourable possible base for the individual, and for each country, under the quota system. We saw the massive increase in milk production in France and in Eire, for instance, which I do not believe was unconnected with the fact that they saw quotas coming — just as we saw massive new fishing in the south-west by the Belgians and the Danes, who were not

traditional fishermen in many cases. Why? Because they saw fish quotas coming, and they wanted to establish the best possible base years for themselves when quotas came in.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As my hon. Friend looks around Devon and Cornwall, will he accept that many fields are presently being turned over to corn precisely for the reasons he outlined? People wonder whether quotas are coming and they are putting those fields into corn. That is happening in counties which are not by any stretch of the imagination natural corn counties. That is happening precisely because, if quotas come in, the farmers will receive a good share.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: That is so, and that is another reason for going ahead. That is why my right hon. Friend the Minister is rightly enthusiastic about set-aside. That is all the more reason for going for massive set-aside as quickly as possible, to prevent the establishment of false bases before quota systems come in.

Many other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate, so I will confine my remarks to those. May I again say how grateful I am to my right hon. Friend the Minister. I cannot remember before in an agricultural debate a Minister personally opening and closing a debate. That does him great credit.

8.55 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I suppose that the one thing that we can all agree on is that if we were trying to devise an agricultural policy for the European Community, we would not start from here. Unfortunately, we have to.

Perhaps the problem is illustrated by the way in which the cereal regime was devised in 1961. In effect, the price determined then had nothing to do with market conditions or world market prices. It was simply a compromise between the high prices in Germany and the low prices in France. In one fell swoop, that resulted in an average increase in cereal prices of 23 per cent. For the French farmer it meant an increase of 37 per cent. in one year. That is the kind of problem that we face.

The motion refers to

"the Government's objective of securing effective control of Community agricultural expenditure."

It is a pity that the Government have not been pursuing that policy since 1979. If we compare expenditure on agriculture in the 1980s with expenditure in the 1970s we find that the average annual rate of increase in the 1980s is 50 per cent. higher than it was in the 1970s when we joined the Community.

Further to that, Britain's receipts from the agricultural funds have been growing twice as fast in the 1980s as in the 1970s. The Government's expenditure on agriculture has been increasing rapidly during the 1980s and in every year except 1981-82, according to the Government's gross figures, the amount of money that the Government spent on agriculture was more than they spent on regional industrial assistance.

I shall give an example. In 1979-80 the Government spent about £801 million on agriculture, whereas on regional policy they spent £628 million. In 1985-86 they spent £1,589 million on agriculture and on regional assistance they spent £732 million. There has been a grave and great divergence between what the Government are prepared to spend on agriculture and on trying to develop our industrial economy. Because of the different financial years of the Community and Britain, I had to make some calculations of my own, but I think that they are roughly right, and certainly the trend of increased expenditure is quite clear.

The Government have been unable to do anything to bring CAP expenditure under control. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) said that in the late 1970s he predicted what would happen to the CAP and to the runaway expenditure. Many people in many parties have been predicting the same thing since the mid-1970s. What has surprised me is that neither the Government nor the farming community has been prepared to face up to the challenge.

The objectives of the CAP were to achieve sufficient production, sufficient income for farmers and an attractive price for consumers. On one count, euphemistically speaking, we have been over-successful and we are plagued by the problems of that success. With regard to farmers' incomes, we must say that across the Community as a whole the policy has failed lamentably. Recently, *The Economist* quoted figures that three quarters of CAP spending goes to 25 per cent. of farmers living in the north and one quarter goes to 75 per cent. of farmers who live in the south. On average, farmers in the north receive 10 times as much income from the CAP as farmers in the south.

We have turned to agricultural stabilisers as a possible solution. One thing that we can say about them is that at least it is politically possible for them to be agreed in some form. As the Minister explained, a great deal of discussion must take place across the range of agricultural products. Nevertheless, the possibility of success must be there. Last week, the European Parliament passed a resolution that backed proposals in terms that would have been unthinkable about five years ago. There are still many preconditions in the resolution that might make it impossible for agricultural stabilisers to work properly.

The proposals consisted of 29 pages and 22 pages of tables of explanation in an abbreviated form, and the Commission published a press statement that was over 15 pages long summarising them. We must admit that, whatever system is introduced, it will be extremely complex. However, we have an example of where it has been done—milk quotas. There is some form of control covering half of CAP products and about two thirds of CAP expenditure.

It is estimated that, in 1984, over 1,000 million ecu were saved, in 1985 nearly 3,000 million ecu were saved, and in 1986 over 4,000 million ecu were saved. Over the past two years, that represents about a 10 per cent. reduction in the agricultural budget. There has been some success. In the short term, because we seem to be reasonably close to agreement, stabilisers offer us an answer, but they can never be answers in the medium or long terms.

One matter that has not been mentioned in the debate, and which has already contributed to the demise of the common agricultural policy, relates to the technological changes that have taken place in agriculture. For example, the industrialisation of dairy production brought about increases that were never envisaged when the CAP was first delivered. We are already reading about further technological changes that could multiply production by 10 or 20 times in many agricultural sectors. That is why it is essential that, gradually — I emphasise the word "gradually", because the farming community needs some

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protection—there must be a reduction of prices so that Community prices approximate to those that are obtainable on world markets. While that process is going on and while, undoubtedly, more quotas will be introduced, the quota system must have built into it a variable factor to take account of smaller farms and poorer land, particularly in peripheral regions and areas such as my own in west Wales.

Last week, the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that the Milk Marketing Board told him that it had no problem in introducing quotas and achieving the necessary cuts. The Milk Marketing Board might not have had a problem, but farmers in west Wales, for example, have had an incredible problem because of the decision to make an across-the-board cut. More than anything else, that shows the need for a variable quota of, say, 2 or 3 per cent. for smaller farmers, rising to 18 or even 20 per cent. for farmers who number their herds in the hundreds. We need a variable system.

In the context of quotas, and the move towards a reduction in prices, I hope that the Minister will ensure that we have a system of income aids, whereby national Governments can make their contributions, with Community support going to those countries whose agricultural income might be below the Community's average.

The tax on oils and fats is still under discussion. I am glad that the Minister intends to fight the matter to the very end. I hope that he will give a further assurance that he will not accept it as a quid pro quo for other changes that may help to improve the common agricultural policy. It has not only price implications for oils and fats within the United Kingdom, but significant implications for world trade agreements and the current GATT discussions affecting agricultural prices.

Although Opposition Members broadly support what the Government are trying to do, it is a pity that they did not address the problem much earlier. They must bring their agricultural spending under control. I urge the Minister to consider the longer-term solutions that will be needed, because the complexities of introducing agricultural stabilisers and quotas will make it possible after a few years to find a means of getting round the system and will eventually lead to a breakdown in the system because it will be so difficult to administer.

9.11 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As someone who is not directly involved in these matters and who does not possess other hon. Members' knowledge of them, I should like to ask the Minister a few questions.

I listened carefully to every word that the Minister said. I should like to hear his opinion of how his speech relates to the reference in the motion to the effective control of Community agricultural expenditure. Quite honestly, I am not convinced that the proposals before us and the Government's additional proposals will reduce Community expenditure. Many of us will want to be convinced that all these measures, discussions and papers are not simply a ritual to be gone through before we increase the EEC's resources.

The Minister must bear in mind that we went through all this before. In 1984, we had non-stop discussions about the reform of the CAP and a lot of talk about the magic of quotas and how they would reduce expenditure. We also had a firm commitment that agricultural spending would be restrained. The Minister will be aware—he has admitted this—that since then spending on agriculture has rocketed. We are now spending £185 million every week simply to dump cheap food on the world market and damage the Third world. That compares with a figure of only £26 million a week in 1977.

The Minister must accept that quotas have not saved money. If he examines the figures he will find that that is the case. He can certainly say, like the apologists in the Liberal party, that under the system of milk quotas we are producing less milk than would otherwise be the case. However, he must face up to what has happened to land formerly used for milk and to the cost of buying out the farmers. In some cases, the land has been switched to use for beef production for a period and in Scotland it has sometimes been switched to cereals and other uses. When we add everything together, is there the slightest suggestion that real savings have been made?

The in word now is "stabilisers". It seems that stabilisers are the answer to all our problems. However, the Minister must give us some idea how they will save Community expenditure. Unlike the Liberals, whose policy appears to be to give a blank cheque signed by the Government to every farmer and to talk about the need for reform, the Government claim to be interested in saving cash.

However, we have had experience of a system of stabilisers in sugar production for many years. We have had A and B and C quotas. The C quotas simply fetch the price available in the world. The Community has operated the system for years, yet in spite of that policy the Common Market is now the largest exporter — or dumper—of food in the world. That is utterly shameful when one bears in mind the effect that that exporting activity is having on the poor Third-world countries. When the Minister says that stabilisers may be the answer to our problems, he should bear it in mind that we are not talking about a responsible Community seeking to contain spending or production but about a Community that has a blatant disregard for the poorest countries of the world, and is dumping massive quantities of sugar at crazy prices on the world markets, causing starvation, distress, misery and death in some of those countries.

What guarantee have we that, when we fix the levels for the so-called stabilisers, the same principle will not occur? The Minister has not given us the slightest indication that stabiliser levels or so-called production levels will be fixed at a figure that will not involve massive dumping on the world market. When we talk about the price of food, we must bear it in mind that the gap between our prices and those in the world market has been growing. Therefore, according to the Common Market's own consumer unit, the average family in Britain is paying an extra £13 per week — rather than the £11·50 referred to in the Opposition's amendment—because of the CAP.

I should like the Minister to say how one saves money on stabilisers if one still has to have export rebates available for food that is not taken into intervention. As I understand it, the principle of the stabiliser is that, when a certain level of production is reached, we will either not take extra supplies into intervention or we will reduce prices. The percentage mentioned in the papers, as the Minister well knows, is a maximum of 5 per cent. How will that cut production? How will it reduce expenditure?

When we look at the current balance sheet, we see that every week the Common Market spends £185 million on export rebates, but spends only £17 million a week on storage. Therefore, the main problem is not storage: the problem is the export rebates. If we are to take slightly less food into intervention stores owned by public authorities, where is the saving if the other food is simply sent to traders and agents and dumped on the Third world with export rebates? The Minister may find that if he closes the intervention stores less milk and beef will be produced because that has to go into cold stores. However, that would simply mean a shift to another area.

I hope that the Minister will give us some idea of how he thinks cash will be saved. That is the object of the exercise. I should like to say that I have confidence in the Government's desire to do so. However, we should bear in mind the devices that the Government have agreed to, simply in order to go beyond the spending limits. They adopted the metric year for expenditure by paying out one month late and taking the money one month early and they have ignored reports by the Court of Auditors saying that they are overspending illegally by transferring the cost of butter dumping to other Governments. That makes me wonder.

Will the Minister please tell us how on earth, on the basis of these proposals, he thinks that stabilisers will reduce Common Market agricultural expenditure? We have had promises and pledges before, but they were not fulfilled. I suggest that we should say no to increased expenditure and accept the fact that a sensible reform of the CAP cannot come out of the arrangement of the EEC where 12 countries sit round together. We should press the case for repatriation of agricultural policy, which would at least mean that we could offer some stability to our farmers, but not offer them a projection of expansion.

9.17 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I realise that the North of Ireland has a separate Department to deal with agriculture, and I shall confine my remarks to the broad areas at which the Minister should take a close look.

The North of Ireland is in a unique position, because its agricultural economy bears no relation to that which we have been discussing today. A small percentage of the economy in England, Scotland and Wales is involved in agriculture, whereas it is 30 per cent. the North of Ireland. One is consumer-oriented and the other is producer-oriented. The agricultural economy in the North of Ireland is concerned with the needs of the producer. Those needs are heightened by the fact that we are talking about the sector of the economy with the highest unemployment rate in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the highest unemployment rate among EEC countries. In the past year, when unemployment was going down everywhere else, it was increasing in the North of Ireland. The agricultural economy in the North of Ireland has a serious built-in structural problem which cannot be put right simply by dealing with the edges. That problem will remain because of the curious way in which agriculture differs from that in other regions.

It was said earlier that there are no units in England, Scotland and Wales small enough to cause concern, but the average size of a farm in the North of Ireland is 42 acres, so we are dealing with a different situation. Problems in relation to milk quotas, stabilisation and subsidies may not be intensified here, but they represent a substantial factor in the depressed economy of Northern Ireland. We must consider the poor economic circumstances in Northern Ireland in the context of the economic situation in the United Kingdom. The circumstances in the North of Ireland are unique and will require unique treatment if we are to cater for the built-in structural defect. I hope that the Minister will be able to deal with the problem and translate words into action.

The economy in the North of Ireland is collapsing around our feet. A stable agricultural economy is being disadvantaged because it is categorised with the larger farm units in England, Scotland and Wales. Commendable efforts are being made to introduce other forms of employment and Government training schemes. I make a plea for a new approach towards the retraining of those who were involved in agriculture, but who cannot now make a living wage from it. I ask the Minister to proceed as quickly as possible with the integrated rural development programme for Northern Ireland, which has been considered favourably by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, but which has not yet been adopted by the Government. The genesis of the rejuvenation of the agribusiness lies in that integrated rural development programme.

9.23 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Most British people welcome attempts to curb agricultural expenditure in the European Community and want to see a much greater impetus towards a far-reaching reform of agricultural policy. However, the road to reform has been long and stony. I am well aware of that, having had the not entirely enviable experience of being a member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee from 1979 to 1984. I remember the long, and unfortunately rather circular, discussions which took place there.

Stabilisers seem to be the latest in a series of Euro-words used to describe attempts to reform the system. I remember that quantum was discussed as a hope for the future, then co-responsibility levies, quotas and what was called, rather coyly, a prudent pricing policy. I hope that stabilisers will be more successful than what can best be described as the patchy effects of previous attempts, which have not cured the problem of surpluses. Unfortunately, that problem is still very much with us.

I am very much aware—I hope the Minister is too—just how powerful the farming lobby is in the European Community and how many of the measures that have been tried in the past have subsequently been nullified by other unfortunate decisions. Often, attempts to impose budgetary discipline in the agricultural sector have subsequently been nullified by foolish increases in the annual price review. I hope that that will not happen in future.

I also worry about the compensatory measures that farmers may call for which might create even further problems. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) referred to forestry as one area where we are still in deficit. Much of our forestry is not viable without unjustified tax concessions and also can have the negative effect of spoiling the environment by insensitive conifer plantations in places which we hoped would remain areas of outstanding natural beauty. So that is not an easy answer to the problems of surpluses.

We have seen, of course, the problems now being created by too many farmers going into rapeseed

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production, which has also had an effect on the countryside. We need to consider carefully what the deficit sectors are and look cautiously at the possibilities of expansion in those sectors in future.

The Minister should strongly resist any attempts to make countries outside the EEC scapegoats for problems which are of our making. I do not want to see further penalties imposed on New Zealand, for example. Obviously, we do not want developing countries to suffer even more from the problems of dumping on the Third world, which has been mentioned several times in the debate. We need a positive discussion with Third-world countries about stabilising world markets. We should not take action which will harm those countries further when they are still suffering from irresponsible decisions taken by the European Community in the past.

The way that agricultural policy has operated up to the present has had detrimental effects on many groups. Consumers have had to pay dearly because of the common agricultural policy, despite the fact that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) mentioned, under article 39 of the treaty of Rome, reasonable prices to consumers were supposed to be one of the cardinal principles on which the common agricultural policy was founded. We have also seen the negative regional effects of the common agricultural policy, whereby wealthy agricultural areas have become even better off and poorer agricultural areas have seen their problems become even more grave.

While stabilisers are helpful, they should not be seen as an end in themselves. That is the purpose of the amendment tabled by my hon. Friends. We do not want stabilisers simply to crystallise the position. We also believe that they may be complicated to administer. We wonder whether the Minister will deal with that problem.

As has been mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and for Bridgend, (Mr. Griffiths), we want to make progress towards longer-term and more fundamental reform, moving away from the guaranteed price system towards direct income aids to those who need aid and working towards a system which will benefit the Community as a whole.

Those are the long-term aims that we want to work for. It is impossible to describe them in more detail, given the time restrictions. While stabilisers may help, the Minister should not lose sight of the long-term fundamental reform which we still believe is as necessary as ever.

9.30 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Tempting as it would be to meander through the mandarins, saunter through the satsumas or linger in the lemon groves to which my right hon. Friend the Minister referred at the beginning of his remarks, we must recognise that he has to go back to difficult negotiations. The terms of what he can do are defined by those negotiations. Reminiscences about the origins of the CAP will not help him. The House must give him a clear message about what he must take back to Brussels and what we hope he will bring from those negotiations.

Stabilisers may not be much, but to quote the cartoonist, they are the only hole we have at the moment, and we must exploit it to the best advantage. It is essential that stabilisers must first operate predominantly on price. There is no point in suggesting that stabilisers are there directly to control production. If they were, I might be against them. I do not want yet more dirigiste measures to direct production introduced into the CAP. Hon. Members who laud quotas have forgotten the immense difficulties which brought quotas into existence and in making them work.

Those who talk about a compulsory set-aside must answer such questions as how the tenant-landlord relationship will work in that extremely difficult situation. We must first ensure that we are dealing predominantly with price and that any incidental effects upon the direct control of production are beneficial. They are not the essential purpose, because budgetary cost is the object of the exercise.

Secondly, the system must be designed to restore intervention to its role as a safety net, because the use of intervention as a market of first resort is at the root of many of the problems experienced in agricultural production. Thirdly, stabilisers must be non-discriminatory against the United Kingdom, as I am sure that the Ministers from other countries will be equally determined that they are not discriminatory against their countries. That means that the policy is one of the lowest common denominator. My constituents and those of right hon. and hon. Members will not forgive us if we come back with a policy that is effective but deeply discriminatory.

Finally, stabilisers must avoid revenue-raising devices which bear upon the consumer or on our GATT obligations. That would be entirely wrong. The trouble is that, at the moment, there is no mechanism to control agricultural policy outside the annual farm prices review. Stabilisers must operate automatically and predictably. The farmers must be certain that they will apply. They must be applied by the Commission in the year in which the problem arises. If they operate in those circumstances, they will at least take us along the road to reform, as compared with the old policy of guaranteed thresholds in which the punishment applied a year after the event and was dependent upon the Minister's approval of the punishment—a measure which there was a singular lack of enthusiasm for accomplishing.

In regard to the cereal sector, the threshold is low; it is high compared to consumption because it includes £25 million-worth of exports, but it is probably the best we can do. It is essential that we reject co-responsibility levies and bear most hard upon prices. If we can get more out of the intervention system, we should try to restrict it further.

I notice that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have one eye on me and one on the clock. I appreciate that the debate is due to be wound up shortly. My last point closely affects my constituency. It is an upland area which depends heavily upon sheep. If sheep go from those hills, there will be very little left. We must look for a regime which continues to support sheep production. We must bear in mind that we do not want the wholesale migration to the lowlands of what is a vocation of the uplands in the United Kingdom, and consider the reforms in that light. I am grateful for your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and look forward to listening to what my right hon. Friend has to say. I wish him luck in his negotiations.

9.34 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): First of all, may I say that I had a great deal of sympathy with the Minister's comments this afternoon, and

especially with his observations about the complementarity of the set-aside scheme with that of the stabiliser scheme, although I have some doubt about the efficacy of stabilisers. I was also sympathetic to the reservations offered in his usual way by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The set-aside scheme should be compulsory rather than voluntary, because if it were the former everyone would be treated in a similar fashion.

Every hon. Member who has spoken has expressed a compassionate and sincere concern about agriculture. The present circumstances, and indeed the future of the industry, are of considerable interest to us all. Our rural economy is tied tightly to the well-being of the industry, its farmers and, I hope, its farm workers. That relationship is plain to see, and can be seen elsewhere. For example, the well-being of our smaller maritime communities is, or in some regrettable cases was, determined by the vitality and success of the local fishermen. In terms of income aids and the documents on income aids, there are some parallels between the two indigenous industries, to which I shall refer later.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the Minister in his attempts to solve the severe problem of massive expenditure while seeking to defend the interests of the farming industry. It might be that the Commission, and the Danish, Dutch and United Kingdom Governments are willing to accept reality, but what about our other partners? Given that the Minister is in the middle of tough negotiations, unlike some hon. Members I shall not ask him to cast a single aspersion on any member state. However, I need not be so diplomatic.

In my view, there is ample evidence that the West Germans, with their less than efficient farming, will refuse to accept any proposals that might harm their farming constituents. It is almost inevitable that the Commission's proposals will be weakened because of that chauvinistic concern with domestic politics.

Bridget Bloom's article in today's *Financial Times* states:

"The West German Government . . . has the strongest objection to the latest proposals designed to curb the Community's spiralling farm budget, on which negotiations resume in Brussells today.

Bonn finds politically unacceptable the reforms envisaged by the European Commission, which would inevitably result in lower prices for farmers. The family farm, from Bavaria in the south to Schleswig-Holstein in the north, has long been seen as the bastion of social stability in the rural areas. Politicians seem to fear that reform of the CAP would threaten that stability."

I wonder how much financial support German farmers obtain from German contributions to the CAP, which would otherwise have to come through the budget of the federal republic. I suspect that that internal subsidy explains the German fondness for the status quo. That traditionalism and conservatism will diminish the effectiveness of the proposals.

Therefore, while the Community's agricultural system is a little more flexible and a little less monolithic than some would have us believe, it is still enormously difficult to bring about fundamental change, but change there must be. There can be no greater absurdity in the world today than massively subsidised food surpluses. If budgetary discipline and savings could be achieved, the money saved could be used to create jobs in rural areas and small market towns.

I should like to ask the Secretary of State what might be a simplistic question about the imbalance between CAP contributions and benefits. Am I correct in assuming that a reduction in the imbalance would reduce our net contribution and would, in turn, reduce our rebate?

Let us consider the more detailed elements and proposals of the negotiations. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) pointed out, it is absolutely essential that, as regards sugar, the Minister continues to defend the interests of the cane sugar producers in the CAP countries. Such defence would be in line with two House of Commons resolutions passed by different Administrations. I must say that I have a constituency interest because the last remaining cane sugar refinery in Scotland is in my constituency and it is extremely important to the Scottish food industry.

It has already been noted that the implementation of milk quotas has diminished the production of milk throughout the Community—so much so that the Danes are now considering whether to import milk from other EEC states to meet their export market in cheese. Some compensation is provided in the circumstances to farmers, but not to their dairymen, some of whom are, unfortunately, made redundant. I believe that is a matter for deep regret and I shall return to it later in my speech.

The hon. Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) pointed out in last Thursday's agriculture and fisheries Question Time that, as regards milk production, we are moving from ridiculous surpluses to possible shortage. I make a plea for the cheese industry in Scotland and elsewhere, because that industry is experiencing severe problems because of the quota system. Is it possible for the Minister to ensure that that element of the dairy industry is given access to the Community's reserve, which I believe at the moment stands at 443,000 tonnes? It is vital that the cheese manufacturers are given access to an all-year-round supply of milk.

I believe that it is possible to introduce a flexible scheme —a scheme that is sensitive to demand throughout the year—and it would benefit cheese makers throughout the United Kingdom. I am sure that all hon. Members would agree with me that we do not want to see creameries closing down anywhere in the United Kingdom because, apart from anything else, they provide much-needed jobs in small towns and villages.

In conclusion I wish to consider the proposals regarding income aids and what I would call the "decommissioning grants" for farmers leaving the industry. The explanatory memorandum to document 6116/87 states:

"A community system for aids to farm incomes"

will provide

"a framework for national aids to farm incomes . . . a 'pre-pension' system".

I believe that such considerations should include the interests and needs of farm workers. In that respect, Victor Robertson of *The Scotsman* agreed with me when he said:

"It would seem logical that if farmers are to get pensions of one sort or another then their employees should be entitled to some parity of treatment".

Surely no one in this House would challenge that parity of treatment. It is also the case that article 39 of the treaty of Rome says, inter alia, regarding farm workers that the objective is

"to ensure a first standard of living for the agriculture community, in particular by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture".

That must surely mean employees as well as employers.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

In relation to that document and with regard to the Agricultural Wages Act 1948 and the Agricultural Wages (Scotland) Act 1949, have the wages boards the power to order that, as part of the minimum wages conditions for the industry, there shall be paid a certain contribution towards the pensions for the workers in that industry? Will the Minister consider that question, and write to me about it? I am not concerned here with the traditional pensions scheme. At the very least, I am seeking a minimum standard of pension cover.

I do not believe that the Commission's proposals on income aid are anywhere near adequate for those who work on small family farms. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said that about 50 per cent. of the farmers in the Grampian region would not enjoy any profit this year. If that is the case, the proposals are even less adequate for the employees of the farms concerned. Family farms often cannot support the family, which may extend to three or four generations. What is the point of talking about pre-pension schemes without planning a system of adequate pension cover for the small farmer?

Let me say one last word about farm workers. I hope that, under the income aid scheme, they do not suffer the same fate as the fishermen employees of the trawler companies that received decommissioning grants to leave the fishing industry.

I wish the Minister well. He has a formidable task, but I believe that the overwhelming majority of right hon. and hon. Members also wish him well.

9.45 pm

Mr. MacGregor: By leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. I am sure that the House will understand that I have left myself comparatively little time to cover all the points that have been raised, and that I therefore cannot cover them all. I think that that is right, because it was important that as many hon. Members as possible should be able to express their views at this stage of the negotiations, and I have listened very carefully to what they have said.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for his broad support on stabilisers. I was also extremely pleased to hear his recognition that it was, and is, most of all our farming community that keeps our countryside attractive and well maintained. It is important to keep making that point to all who criticise our farmers, most unfairly, on environmental grounds. It is also important to remember that farming subsidies, particularly in the hills and the less-favoured areas, make an environmental contribution. They mean that farmers and their wives are working, one might almost say, 24 hours a day for a small income, keeping the countryside attractive and, at the same time, a tourist attraction.

The hon. Gentleman described the common agricultural policy as a failure. Only recently has that been so, in that it has produced the surpluses and the subsidy costs that have accompanied them. However, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) that we should also consider the important successes that the CAP has brought, and in particular the considerable contribution made to the nation by our farmers through their efficiency, their capacity to innovate and to take advantage of opportunities, and their consequent provision of food at a reasonable cost.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the CAP when he referred to the job losses in the agricultural and rural communities since the war, but I do not think that the CAP can be judged on that basis. First, as with every other aspect of economic activity, it is vital that our agricultural industry remains competitive and takes advantage of technological improvements. That has been very much in my mind in the negotiations. However, it will of course mean job losses. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman asked me to take firm action to deal with surpluses. He must realise that that would mean further job losses, especially in other member states whose farming structures are less efficient than ours. That is the other side of dealing with surpluses.

The hon. Member for South Shields also mentioned the problem of job losses in the dairy creameries, where supply had outstripped demand. That is due to a readjustment to market needs, which happens in the same way in other economic activities. If we are bringing pressure on the surpluses, we must accept that as a problem at the same time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a separate problem in relation to dairy creameries — the problem of cheese manufacturers. He recognised that it was not a quota problem, but primarily one of pricing, marketing and distribution. It does not seem sensible to the general public, or to me, that where there is a market and a product that can be bought by the consumer, there should be a shortage of supply at a time when some of the same product is going into intervention and so being financed by the taxpayer. That is not a sensible system and I and my noble Friend Lord Sanderson are having talks with individual milk marketing boards to see whether we can find a solution to that problem.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to comment on the clean slate proposal. The *Financial Times* report was somewhat condensed and may have given a misleading impression in implying that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saw the clean slate proposal as an alternative to stabilisers. That is certainly not so. It was clear from the interview that she, as always, sees effective stabilisers as an important part of the CAP. The clean slate proposal was really in relation to the disposal and depreciation of stocks, which is different. That has not been discussed in the Agriculture Council as we have been concentrating on stabilisers, but I believe that a discussion did take place in today's Foreign Affairs Council.

I also want to stress that my right hon. Friend made it clear that that proposal is one possibility in relation to stocks. She acknowledged the fact that other member states may not be ready to accept it and she put forward other ways of dealing with the disposal and depreciation of stocks. We put that proposition on the table because we think that it should be explored.

Costs will depend on a variety of factors, depending on the type of scheme that we eventually come up with and the market situation in relation to the disposals. Therefore, I cannot give a clear figure on that point tonight.

The hon. Member for South Shields asked about the 155 million tonnes maximum guaranteed quantity for cereals. That is not a national figure; it is a Community figure for the total Community cereal production. It triggers off a Community mechanism and reaction. Therefore, it would apply Communitywide. It is important

that that should be so, because we are efficient cereal producers. Where one is talking about a mechanism that bears down on price support, it is the efficient producers —here I take up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) and I agree that stabilisers should deal with price support — which will benefit from such an application so long as they remain competitive.

I was not clear whether the hon. Gentleman wanted a national figure, but, for the reason that I have just given, it would have a disadvantage for us. That is one of the difficulties of proposals that some people put forward for national quotas. Such proposals do not benefit the most competitive and efficient.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside made many salient points, as I would expect, given his knowledge and experience. I recognise his point about farm incomes and the impact of the painful adjustments on the ordinary average farmer—I think that those were his words—that we are having to make. It is salutary and important that all of us concerned with the farming community and its welfare should continue to stress that point. I sometimes get the feeling that there is a misguided impression—often on the Opposition Benches, if I may say so—that farmers are feather-bedded and well off. That may be because some members of the general public think that all subsidies go to farmers. I am conscious of my right hon. Friend's point. I constantly bear it in mind and I know precisely how farm incomes have dropped over recent years.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), too, made the point that, in the less-favoured areas of the hills, incomes are modest, particularly when related to the hours that people work. That needs to be continually stressed. I am constantly trying to put over that fact to the public, in addition to the point that I made earlier about farmers' contribution to the environment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside also raised the issue of income support. One should distinguish between all the measures that we are pursuing, including set-aside and the extensification scheme, which are, in one sense, income support, and the direct income aid measures in the Commission proposals which have a number of disadvantages, to one of which I alluded at the beginning of the debate.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North also referred to farm incomes and the problems in the hills. I am sure that he will accept that we increased the suckler cow premium by 35 per cent. in the past year. He will also have heard of my anxiety to remove the discriminatory elements in the sheepmeat stabiliser proposals that are before us. There is a great deal to examine in the wider sheepmeat regime proposals, to which I have not yet been able to refer.

Our overriding aim is to achieve a balanced series of reforms. We must resist discrimination against United Kingdom interests and work for arrangements that yield freer competition as well as fair and affordable support for the sector, so enabling the United Kingdom to capitalise, as the hon. Gentleman said, on its natural advantages. There will be a most complex set of negotiations, because there are wide varieties of different systems in sheepmeat throughout the Community, but that is certainly my aim.

We are not likely to be able to negotiate clawback out if the variable premium remains. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises that. Finally, I agree with him about the importance of marketing.

I always listen to what my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) says. I shall not have time to deal in as much length as I should like with his interesting points. He will recognise that one big difference between the early sixties and now is that we now have large surpluses, or ever-rising support costs—a problem which must be tackled. A stabiliser mechanism would significantly reduce the cost of supporting cereals production in excess of the maximum guaranteed quantity, including reducing the costs of export refunds which are such a large part today. I make that point especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). That would therefore tend to reduce the incentive to increase the production of cereals. I am also seeking complementary measures such as a set-aside scheme, and other options.

As I listened to my hon. Friend discussing the problem of quotas for cereals, I wanted to ask him what alternatives he would advance. The problem is that we have 4 million cereal producers in the Community, which includes member states that do not have quite the same administrative machinery to ensure that a quota system could operate as well, fairly and effectively as one that we might have to build up here. That would be difficult enough for us. For that, and a number of other reasons, a cereals quota is strongly resisted in the Commission and Council.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that the process of trying to achieve effective stabilisers is not only a matter of papers and rituals. I recognise that stabilisers are not a panacea — nothing is. However, no one could be more aware than Agriculture Ministers that grappling with the issues that we face is a monumental task. We are seeking effective stabilisers that may not have an immediate impact, but, because they build up, I assure my hon. Friend that they would have one.

We do not yet have firm figures, because we do not have firm agreement on particular mechanisms, but the estimates that I have seen will build up substantially by the third year if we get what we want. I remind my hon. Friend that the reforms carried through in the past three years — mainly milk quotas, the co-responsibility levy and beef intervention price reductions — have produced overall savings compared with what would have happened without them of £4·2 billion, or 6 billion ecu. I think I said earlier—in haste—6·6 billion ecu, but I should have said 6 billion ecu.

I have listened carefully to all that was said by the hon. Members for South Shields and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I have also noted the content of their amendment and have some reservations about it. I certainly dispute the figure of £11·50 a week, but do not have time to go into that. Stabilisers are much more fundamental than just an interim measure and I do not wish to accept all the prescriptions of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

We have seen from the mood, tone and spirit of what the Opposition said that the House is very much in line with the Government recognition of the need for CAP reform and for what we are trying to do to achieve effective stabilisers. In recognising that, I am prepared to accept the

[Mr. MacGregor]

Opposition amendment, but, as is clear from the debate, that acceptance is on the basis that the part of the Government motion endorsing our objectives outlined in the Order Paper is essential. Therefore, in moving towards effective stabilisers we are acting in the interests of the farmer, the taxpayer and the consumer. I am grateful for the support in all parts of the House for what we are doing and for the objectives that we are seeking to achieve.

Amendment agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8250/87 on Common Agricultural Policy reform, 8761/87 and ADD 1 to ADD 4, and 9066/87, on implementation of agricultural stabilisers and 6116/1/87, on agricultural income aids; believes that the current expenditure on the Common Agricultural Policy which is currently costing the average household of four persons £11·50 per week is insupportable; and accepts the concept of meaningful stabilisers as an interim measure to enable the Council of Ministers to work out a suitable means to reduce surpluses and to devise a lasting and rational agricultural policy for the European Community.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on motions 4 to 9 on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Income Tax

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Bulgaria) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (France) (No. 2) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Nigeria) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 23rd July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Pakistan) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 23rd July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Belgium) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 23rd July.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malaysia) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Addresses to be presented to Her Majesty by such Members of this House as are of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council or of Her Majesty's Household.

Select Committees

AGRICULTURE

Question proposed,

That Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Calum A. Macdonald, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Paul Marland, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Jerry Wiggin and Mrs. Ann Winterton be members of the Agriculture Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do I understand that objection will be taken to all the subsequent motions proposed on behalf of the Committee of Selection?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I intend to object to all of them except the motion on the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

DEFENCE

Question proposed,

That Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Bruce George, Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Jonathan Sayeed, Mr. Neil Thorne and Mr. John Wilkinson be members of the Defence Committee.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS

That Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Win Griffiths, Mrs. Maureen Hicks, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Timothy Raison, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Malcolm Thornton and Sir Gerard Vaughan be members of the Education, Science and Arts Committee.

EMPLOYMENT

That Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Ken Eastham, Sir Philip Goodhart, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Ron Leighton, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. James Paice, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Lewis Stevens and Mr. David Young be members of the Employment Committee.

ENERGY

That Mr. Michael Brown, Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. Geoffrey Dickens, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Rhodri Morgan, Mr. Peter Rost, Mr. Alex Salmond and Mr. Tony Speller be members of the Energy Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

That Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Peter Pike, Sir Hugh Rossi and Mr. Robin Squire be members of the Environment Committee.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

That Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. David Howell, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. Jim Lester, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, Mr. Bowen Wells and Mr. Michael Welsh be members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

HOME AFFAIRS

That Mr. David Ashby, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. David Clelland, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. Ivor Stanbrook, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Tony Worthington be members of the Home Affairs Committee.

SOCIAL SERVICES

That Mr. Jerry Hayes, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. Terry Patchett, Sir David Price, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Roger Sims, the Reverend Martin Smyth, Audrey Wise, Mr. Nicholas Winterton and Mr. Tim Yeo be members of the Social Services Committee.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

That Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Stan Crowther, Dr. John Gilbert, Sir Anthony

Grant, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr. Barry Porter and Mr. Kenneth Warren be members of the Trade and Industry Committee.

TRANSPORT

That Mr. David Gilroy Bevan, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr. Terry Dicks, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Peter Fry, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. David Mudd and Mr. Neville Trotter be members of the Transport Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Resolved,

That Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Nicholas Budgen, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Ms. Joyce Quin, Mr. Giles Radice, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. John Townend, Mr. John Watts and Mr. David Winnick be members of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Question proposed,

That Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Sir Raymond Gower, Mr. Gwilym Jones, Mr. Richard Livsey, Sir Anthony Meyer, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Keith Raffan, Sir John Stradling Thomas, Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, Mr. Gareth Wardell and Mr. Alan W. Williams be members of the Welsh Affairs Committee. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

PETITION

Poll Tax

10.2 pm

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollock): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to submit this humble petition against the poll tax on behalf of the people in my constituency. They reject the regressive system of taxation which is unrelated to ability to pay, which will be expensive to administer and which will bring hardship to the poorest people in Scotland.

Your petitioners pray that your honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987.

To lie upon the Table.

Mental Health (Special Hospitals)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

10.3 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): Hon. Members will be aware that the second biennial report of the Mental Health Act Commission was laid before Parliament at the end of October. The commission, of which I was a member until April, is a special health authority set up by the Mental Health Act 1983 and it has a range of powers, duties and responsibilities with regard to detained and restricted psychiatric patients.

The second biennial report, which I commend to the House, describes the commission's work in the past two years and raises a number of concerns. I shall draw the attention of the House to some of these concerns about the special hospitals at Broadmoor, Rampton, Moss Side and Park Lane which between them have about 1,700 detained patients at any one time. These patients are among the most disturbed and difficult people in the country. Many of them will have to remain in secure hospitals for the rest of their lives.

To care for such patients is one of the most demanding tasks in the whole of the health care field, and our society is indebted to the doctors, nurses and other staff who undertake the work, not least because society is at best ambivalent about its expectations of the special hospitals. Public opinion, as we all know, veers from the shock-horror treatment of so-called revelations of abuses— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I must tell the House that the Chair cannot tolerate hon. Members approaching the Chair and seeking to debate the selection of speakers in the debate. If hon. Members persist in doing that, the Chair will have no alternative but to exercise the disciplinary powers vested in it. I apologise to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Shephard: I repeat that public opinion veers from the shock-horror treatment of so-called revelation of abuses in the special hospitals to baying condemnation when a patient absconds or is discharged, only to reoffend. Frankly, the public would prefer that the problem did not exist and that the staff were left to cope with keeping the difficult balance between security and care. Precisely because the public has that ambivalence, because the problems of working with those patients are so great and because the patients—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must instruct the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) to leave the Chamber for the remainder of this day's sitting. As the hon. Member refuses to obey my instruction, I have no alternative but to name him.

Motion made, and Question,

That Mr. Dafydd Wigley be suspended from the service of the House.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

put and agreed to.

Mrs. Shephard: The public would prefer that the problem of the special hospitals and those in them did not exist and that the staff were left to cope with the difficult balance between security and care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to tell the House that the hon. Member refuses to withdraw from the House

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

in accordance with the decision and wishes of the House. I must, therefore, ask the Serjeant at Arms to escort him from the House.

Mrs. Shephard: I hope that I get a bit of injury time.

Because the public are ambivalent, because the problems of working with those patients are so great, and because those patients are particularly vulnerable, being ill and disturbed and liable to long years of detention, I wish to draw the attention of the House to some of the issues that are raised in the report. They can be summed up in the word "management".

I will deal with two aspects of management—in the Griffiths sense of running the hospitals, and in the technical sense as defined in the Mental Health Act 1983 as to the powers and duties of managers. Until recently, the day-to-day management responsibility for the special hospitals lay with the DHSS special hospitals office committee, which to all intents and purposes delegated it to the local hospital management teams. For the past few years, Rampton has had a management board.

The DHSS special hospitals office committee on behalf of the Secretary of State for Social Services has acted as manager in the technical sense of the word under the Mental Health Act 1983. Since 1 January of this year, new hospital boards have come into being at Broadmoor, Park Lane and Moss Side, bringing them into line with Rampton. Why have the Secretary of State and the DHSS chosen not to apply the Griffiths principles of management to the special hospitals with general and unit managers that they introduced in the rest of the Health Service and which have been very successful?

Let us recall why the Griffiths reforms were introduced. They were introduced to sweep away the accretions of decades of half-reorganisations in the National Health Service and introduce the concept of accountability at regional, district and unit level to enable effective decisions to be made at local level with a minimum of bureaucratic fuss and ensure that the public, and above all the patients, knew where the buck stopped.

What is the position now at the special hospitals? We have an interesting palimpsest of all forms of organisation known to the NHS since its inception and in some respects dating back even earlier, possibly to the Boer war. In each hospital there is a medical director. His Boer war predecessor was known as a medical superintendent. What are his duties and responsibilities? Does he operate on the 1968 cog-wheel principle of co-operation with his consultant colleagues or on the consensus management principle introduced in 1974? Each hospital has a hospital management team consisting of doctor, nurse and administrator.

New hospital boards have the status of special health authorities. What does that involve? Are they any more than a giant leap back to 1948? How helpful will they be in solving the acute problems of those hospitals? Will they speed up decision-making? Can they hire and fire? How will they help patients and staff? It is certain that the boards add an extra layer. The answer to those questions will be that the boards are in their early days. My reply to that is that there is no time to waste and some of the problems highlighted in the commission's report illustrate my point. In passing, it is interesting to note that the statutory instrument setting up the boards which was laid before the House is innocent of any mention of the word "management".

Some of the issues raised in the report, as I have said, illustrate the problem of management. One of the problems which looms large involves the investigation of complaints. Procedures for investigating complaints, including those made by and on behalf of detained patients, are set out in memorandum HC(81)5. That circular, as I understand it, does not apply to special hospitals and neither does the clinical complaints procedure set out in circular HN(83)31.

The statutory instrument covering the boards gives them

"functions in relation to the operation of an adequate procedure for the investigation of complaints made by, or on behalf of any person who is a patient in the hospital in respect of any service provided at the hospital."

Those functions may have as their aim the bringing into line of the special hospitals under the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985. I do not know whether that is so, but if so it would not be before time. There is no agreed procedure for dealing with serious complaints at any of the four special hospitals. That point was made as long ago as 1980 in the report of the review of Rampton hospital which was presented to the House.

The Mental Health Act Commission has been very concerned about what appears to be uneven practice and policy on patient complaints at the special hospitals. For a complaints procedure to work, it is essential that patients and their relatives should know what the procedure consists of and how it works and that they should regard it as fair. There is as yet no definitive written complaints procedure for the special hospitals. The commission has experienced consistent difficulties in establishing the procedures. Consider then how much worse it must be for the patient, who may well feel not only that it is useless to make a complaint, but that to make one might jeopardize his progress in the hospital.

The difficulties of dealing with complaints from very disturbed and ill patients are obvious. The very fact of their illness may cast doubt on the quality of their evidence. Nevertheless, they have the right of access to a fair, impartial and respected complaints procedure. They have the right to be interviewed in private and the right to feel that they can make a complaint with impunity. That is not the current position, as the commission report makes plain. I would welcome clarification from my hon. Friend the Minister about the progress or otherwise of the DHSS scrutiny of the draft procedure submitted by the special hospitals. I would like clarification on the likely time scale and the degree to which the new boards will be empowered to act on complaints that are upheld.

I refer the House to the draft code of practice for the Mental Health Act 1983, which was issued by the DHSS in August 1987. Section 171 laid down that health authorities should set up procedures for dealing with complaints from patients, that they must be in accordance with DHSS advice in the famous health circular (81)85, and that they should be explained clearly to patients, relatives and staff. I hope that that advice will be implemented with the utmost speed for the sake of all patients in the special hospitals, who are presently the only people who do not benefit from such procedures.

The Mental Health Act Commission's report cites in its complaints section an example called case B of a patient's

complaint and the unsatisfactory way in which it was dealt with. The patient was not interviewed by the hospital management team; the nursing staff concerned eventually, after a delay of seven months, declined to be interviewed, and it therefore proved impossible to reach any firm conclusions on whether the original complaints were justified. However, the commission was able to uphold the patient's dissatisfaction with the hospital investigation.

That case clearly illustrates the need for strong local management that is able to grasp and deal with a difficult problem. I should welcome any assurance from my hon. Friend that the new hospital boards will improve that highly anomalous problem. The DHSS as manager, in the technical sense of the word, under the Act does not observe the guidance on complaints procedures that it issues to others and expects them to observe.

The complexities of running a large residential unit, which must be as secure as a prison, where some patients will have to remain for life and which is nevertheless a hospital with expectations of carrying out rehabilitation work, are immense. Let us consider, for example, the apparently very simple problem of patients' possessions and how and where they are stored and accounted for. In theory, on admission, a patient might own a house full of furniture with some valuable items — perhaps a grand piano, a car and so on. Those items cannot be disposed of if there is any expectation that the patient might be discharged. If he has no relatives, or they are unable or unwilling to take responsibility for the items, the hospital has to dispose of such items. On occasion some of the possessions might be returned to the patient—obviously not the grand piano — for use on the ward. The bureaucratic nightmare of dockets, records and interim storage places is made more difficult because the patient, due to his illness or medication, may forget or mislay his property. The problem is compounded because the management responsibility is diffused over several fronts.

Special hospitals, with their combination of problems and complexities, should have the benefit of the general management principles that have been introduced elsewhere in the Health Service. I apply a simple test of accountability whether in the private or public sector—who does one telephone when one wants to know something? In the case of the National Health Service, the health authorities, Marks and Spencer or Sainsburys, one rings up the manager. However, is it so clear in special hospitals? Does one ring the medical director or his Boer War predecessor, the superintendent, the nursing officer, the secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, the chairman of the hospital board, the office committee—if so, which member—or does one ring the porter's lodge, which would be most likely to give you the answer?

I hope that the hospital boards will do a good job, but I question, for the sake of patients and staff in special hospitals, the decision that has applied to this management problem a solution that is more appropriate to the early 20th century, when the 1980s solution—which is already working well in the National Health Service — might have brought better results for all concerned.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) and of the Minister?

10.18 pm

Mr. Kirkhope: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not detain the House. I know that the Minister is pressed for time.

I support everything said by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard). As a colleague of hers on the Mental Health Act Commission during its early years I can say that the concern of many of us, which is shown in the second biennial report, is that there should be complete consistency when dealing with complaints in special hospitals. I am sure that the Minister will have that matter in mind.

The only other issue that I shall mention, which is related to what my hon. Friend said, refers to the provisions of section 120 of the Mental Health Act 1983. I urge the Minister to consider the possibility of an amendment to allow a friend or relative of a mentally ill patient to be able to assist more fully in a complaint on behalf of the patient. Such actions would greatly assist those who, perhaps, are particularly disadvantaged through illness and perhaps need the extra help that would be available to them in such circumstances.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) on her success in the ballot and on raising with such intelligence and lucidity this important topic for debate. The House will also wish to mark her dignity and forbearance in the alarums earlier this evening, which must have been an unpleasant experience for a new hon. Member.

I thank also my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) for his remarks.

The mental health legislation was updated in 1983, for the first time in nearly a quarter of a century. Its objective was to protect the rights of patients who had been detained under the existing legislation. Much of the emphasis was on patients' civil liberties. It would be fair to say that, by the early 1980s there was concern that patients' interests had perhaps been somewhat neglected. The Act clarified the procedures for consent to treatment, and the Mental Health Act Commission was charged with the statutory task of monitoring the powers under the Act. It was set up as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West described. It has been chaired with great distinction from the beginning by Lord Colville, to whom the nation owes a considerable debt of gratitude. My hon. Friend was appointed as one of the first Mental Health Act commissioners—one of about 90 in England and Wales — and served until her adoption and election to the House.

I should like to put on record the deepest and most heartfelt thanks to my hon. Friend and all her colleagues for the painstaking and professional work that they have done. As a result, our mental health institutions are certainly that much more civilised, humane, and, I hope, successful than they might otherwise have been.

The commissioners have the following key tasks: to protect the interests of patients who are detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act, by visiting and interviewing them, by investigating complaints—a large section of their current report reflects that work — by

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

keeping under review the way in which the Act operates, and by requiring the second opinions that the Act requires before certain types of treatment can be given to patients.

The commission also prepared the first draft of a code of practice on admission to hospital and treatment of mentally disordered patients, which is described in section 8 of its report. The final version of the code will be laid before Parliament next year, following consultation with statutory professional and voluntary bodies. That is part of the answer to one of my hon. Friend's questions.

The commission is required to publish a report every two years, and the Secretary of State is required to lay it before Parliament. I have it here. My hon. Friend referred to the commission's second biannual report, which was laid before the House on 28 October. The reports are a mine of information on the practice and treatment of our most seriously ill mental patients who, without our care and control, would be a danger to themselves and the public. They are also written in a sensible manner that is comprehensible to the lay public, and I commend them to the House. They make interesting reading. The report raises many important issues. Obviously, it goes much wider than special hospitals. We are studying it closely and we shall discuss many of the detailed points that it raises with the commission.

My hon. Friend raised some specific points relating to special hospitals. As she knows, the Mental Health Act Commission covers all detained mental patients, wherever they are. Those who require special security are found in the four special hospitals—Broadmoor, Rampton, Park Lane and Moss Side. I share her considerable admiration for the staff who work in those hospitals, notwithstanding recent difficulties at Moss Side. They have a most difficult job to do.

My hon. Friend spoke about changes in management and asked some pertinent questions about some management issues, which we shall take into account. She will know of the commission's unqualified welcome for local management boards, which is most encouraging.

Since the beginning of this year local boards have been placed at all the hospitals, with a single board for Moss Side and Park Lane hospitals. The boards now have delegated responsibility for the management of the hospitals and we are extremely fortunate in having for each of the boards a chairman and members with a wide range of background experience drawn from the local community and the professions.

Before the boards were set up—the first was set up in Rampton in 1981—the special hospitals were managed directly by the Department of Health and Social Security. Ministers now see the boards as providing strengthened local leadership and achieving precisely the kind of improved management efficiency and effectiveness and the improved patient care that my hon. Friends seek. The boards do not have an employment function, because the staff are civil servants and they do not control admission which is still done centrally by the DHSS admissions panel, which deals with about 200 admissions per year.

Nevertheless, the local boards exercise four important functions. First, they are responsible for the provision of all services at the hospitals, including professional services. In practice, that means giving support and advice as required to hospital staff at all levels and developing policies and programmes to maintain and improve the care of patients.

Secondly, the boards will determine priorities in relation to the use of manpower resources, revenue and capital funds. In essence, that means that they decide how the available money can best be spent, and I shall come to the sum that is available in a moment. It is the boards' job to ensure that value for money is obtained by improving efficiency wherever possible. That was also the major purpose behind the Griffiths management reforms.

Thirdly, the boards are charged specifically with ensuring that adequate procedures for the investigation of complaints made by or on behalf of patients are indeed in operation. Fourthly, the boards will act as managers of the hospitals in the context of the Mental Health Act 1983 — for example, in carrying out the requirement in respect of renewals of detention.

On all the matters that have been delegated to them, the local management boards, with the support of the hospital management teams, will be directly accountable to Ministers. I am sure that that will be a firm basis on which to meet the challenges to come, and I hope that my hon. Friend will allow the boards just a little more time, given that they have had only a few months, before passing judgment on them. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend's comments were most useful.

My hon. Friend asked about the complaints procedure. As she will know, we are now well advanced with draft proposals for a standard policy and procedure for the handling of patients' complaints, and these are currently the subject of consultations with the local management boards. The proposals reflect the key requirements laid on the Health Service by the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985. They also take into account the fundamental principles that are now outlined in the commissioners' report, including the need to interview patients—a point upon which the commissioners' report laid particular emphasis. The Department's draft—it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State alone to produce the draft —also takes account of the local procedure currently being operated in each of the four hospitals. That is why we have not formally endorsed the procedure drawn up by the Broadmoor hospital ethics committee.

Local management boards will be responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedure that is finally negotiated and agreed with the hospitals and the staff side representatives is operated properly. The fact that the DHSS retains the employment function should not affect the boards' ability to exercise those responsibilities.

The Prison Officers Association, which represents a large part of the staff concerned, has repeatedly made clear its view that complaints leading to allegations of a criminal nature against staff should be referred to the police and that no pre-emptive action should be taken by management against the member of staff involved. That view has never been accepted by my Department or local management, which will continue to exercise its right to take action in advance of the outcome of police inquiries if the facts of the case make that appropriate.

Any staff member who is charged by the police is suspended from duty until the outcome of a police investigation and any subsequent prosecution that might take place is known. We agree with the commission that nothing should stand in the way of management pursuing its own disciplinary action if necessary, and this is done.

If management issues alone are involved, my Department expects the hospitals to mount their own management inquiry.

My hon. Friend cited an illustrative case study—that of patient B. I would not wish to say whether the facts as given were right or wrong, but we would have to agree that for anyone to have to wait for such an extraordinarily long time to be told the outcome is indefensible.

I turn to money and manpower. Psychiatry in general is a priority service for development money and has been for some time. There have been substantial increases in staff but, nevertheless, mental illness is the second biggest burden on the Health Service after heart disease. Recognition by successive Ministers of the need to improve and develop patient treatment and care has led to a substantial build-up in resources for the special hospitals in recent years. Annual increases in revenue funding have been consistently higher than those of the Health Service as a whole. Since 1980-81 actual spending has increased from £28 million to £54·6 million in 1986-87 — an increase of 95 per cent. in cash, as compared with Health Service growth as a whole of 57 per cent. over the same period. After allowing for pay and price movements, the comparable figures are 23·9 per cent. and 11·5 per cent. respectively. Therefore, special hospitals funding has grown twice as fast.

Spending per patient has increased in the special hospitals from £14,461 a year to £32,257 a year. Since 1980, staffing levels have increased from 2,604 to 3,249 currently, an increase of just under 25 per cent. At the same time, there has been a reduction in patient numbers from 1,937 to just over 1,700. Those trends have combined to result in a notable improvement in patient-staff ratios from 1·3 staff per patient to two staff per patient. Regional secure units are even more generous in their funding. In the past two years, the rate of growth in revenue funding in real terms has slowed down, reflecting the progress that has already been made in improving levels of staffing and service. The current year has seen a modest further increase in staffing of about 27 posts.

There is also an extensive building programme that is managed directly by DHSS headquarters and represents a substantial investment in redeveloping and modernising the hospitals. The current spend is in excess of £10 million a year and that level of spending is projected well into the 1990s. As an illustration, stage one of the Broadmoor rebuild has cost us £30 million and the current estimated total cost of the four-stage development at that one hospital is £69 million. Completion is expected within about 10 years.

As well as the Broadmoor rebuild, the programme provides for extensive upgrading of the infrastructure at Rampton, and there are extensive works at Park Lane. The new Park Lane hospital in Liverpool has been built to provide up-to-date single room accommodation with modern supporting facilities for up to 400 patients. In that way, patients who may well spend the rest of their lives in hospital at least may have some privacy and some individuality, and working conditions for staff can be noticeably improved. However, it is an expensive business.

I hope that what I have said has shown that Ministers and officials are addressing themselves to the concerns raised by my hon. Friends. I will write to them in more detail, if I may, on some of the other points raised and I am pleased to have had an opportunity to air this important subject.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 25 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS BILL

Order for consideration read.
Lords amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Output

1. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by how much he now expects manufacturing output to increase during 1987.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): In his Autumn Statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast that manufacturing output would be 5 per cent. higher in 1987 than in 1986.

Mr. Bennett: May I start, Mr. Speaker, by wishing you many happy returns of the day on behalf of us all.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the enormous increase in manufacturing productivity of the past two or three years means that we shall be in very good shape to weather the storm caused by the international fall in equity prices?

Mr. Butcher: For the past three or four years the British economy has celebrated particularly happy anniversaries, in that it has grown faster than nearly all our major industrial competitors. As to the fall in equities, I am encouraged by the fact that the main barometer used by the manufacturing sector — its order book position — remains healthy, and recent CBI reports confirm that.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister aware that textile firms, such as Lees-Newsome Ltd. in my constituency, have been badly affected by the increase in electricity charges? The company has written to me, and perhaps to the Minister, claiming that its export potential will be diminished by that increase. Was there any consultation with the Department before these increased charges were allowed?

Mr. Butcher: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall deal with the detail of the hon. Gentleman's question under question 5. Suffice to say the textile industry has enjoyed a remarkable recovery. It is getting its order share back and is concentrating on improving its design. It is obtaining higher value and has become very competitive. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be proud of that.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Does it not augur well for manufacturing output in 1988 that 49 per cent. of CBI companies expect to increase their investment in plant and machinery next year? Given the uncertainties in the financial markets, is that not a positive endorsement of the strength of the British economy and of the new competitiveness of British industry?

Mr. Butcher: That is very much the case. In the Autumn Statement, growth is projected at 3·5 per cent. for manufacturing output in 1988. It is a long time since the British economy has been able to sustain good, non-inflationery, real growth arising from increased competition and improvement in market share. All the signs are good.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Given that manufacturing investment in Britain is still lower than it was in 1979, that British real interest rates are higher than those of our competitors, that manufacturing imports have a higher share of our market than of any other advanced industrial country and that the pound against the deutschmark is now up by 11 per cent. in real terms compared with February, the Minister will not be too optimistic about prospects for manufacturing, so I shall ask him a simple, straightforward question: can he name one industrial country that has had a lower increase in manufacturing output than Britain since 1979?

Mr. Butcher: I can understand why the Opposition are getting increasingly desperate in their search for bad news. Throughout the 1970s we were at the bottom of the league table in manufacturing output and growth, and we are now consistently at the top. This country is now enjoying increased competitiveness in each of its major sectors and has an excellent future.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend will be aware that many economic pundits wrote off manufacturing as a source of new jobs. How does my hon. Friend expect this increase in output to be reflected in the manufacturing sector and employment?

Mr. Butcher: Until recently it was fashionable to say that, with the introduction of new manufacturing techniques, especially automation, it would be impossible to reverse the fall in employment in the manufacturing sector. That need not always be the case in future. It depends entirely on the way in which we continue to increase our market share. I fully agree with the comments made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in July that inflation is certainly under control, that the balance of payments is likely to be manageable and that output is rising relatively fast.

Balance of Trade (Manufactures)

2. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recently available monthly figure for the United Kingdom balance of trade in manufactures.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): For the month of October there was a deficit of £0·7 billion in trade in manufactures.

Mr. Cummings: According to recent figures, we are heading for a £7·5 billion deficit this year. Is it true that the deficit is not just in traditional industries but in high technology new industries? Does the Minister agree with

the Chancellor's statement that the deficit is neither here nor there? Will the hon. Gentleman direct his attention away from the City and concentrate on those parts of the economy that are creating wealth and providing and selling goods and services?

Mr. Clark: The deficit estimate has already been revised downwards twice. The estimate by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement was already a downward revision from the estimate in the March Budget review. I believe that the figures will undershoot that estimate when the whole year is assessed.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it true that under the Labour Government and, indeed, for most of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s our balance of trade in manufactured goods moved rapidly towards deficit, but that in the past four years, for the first time in many years, not only has that deterioration stopped but our share of world trade in manufactures has increased?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right. Plainly, I have no responsibility for the direction of events under the Labour Government. The important point is that the quality of new manufacturing in terms of productivity and commercial resilience is now quite different.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the Minister know that, according to answers given by his colleagues, since 1980 about 22 million tonnes of hot-rolled steel have been imported? Does he also know that last year £1·1 billion worth of hot-rolled steel was imported? What will the hon. Gentleman do about this ruinous situation? Privatisation will not help.

Mr. Clark: The traffic, both inward and outward, in steel is, to a large extent, a function of our obligations under the treaty of Rome as a member of the European Community.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the outrageous position whereby British manufacturers of shoes and leather goods are handicapped when seeking to enter the Japanese market, not only by levies but by quotas? To add insult to injury, no one can find out who owns those quotas. Will my hon. Friend see whether he can knock some sense into the Japanese?

Mr. Clark: I am always delighted when the House returns to the subject of our trade relations with Japan. In fact, the shoe and leather section is one of the least satisfactory in that regard. However, I must say in all honesty—I hope that the House may take some credit for this improvement having expressed its indignation so forcefully last July—that our manufactured exports to Japan have increased by 30 per cent. over the past year.

Mr. Kennedy: What analysis is the Department making of the effect of the Government's regional policy—particularly the cuts in regional grants that the Government have made over the past three years—on our ability to contribute towards manufacturing output, not least from the Scottish economy.

Mr. Clark: The question refers to the balance of trade in manufactures. However, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make a short answer, I understand that there have been no cuts in regional development grants.

Inner Cities

3. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the most recent figures for the establishment of manufacturing and service industry firms in the inner cities.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I regret that the information requested by my hon. Friend is not available because we do not keep the statistics on this basis.

Mr. Bowis: Nevertheless, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, although the Government are making great strides in their policy towards encouraging investment in the inner cities in both manufacturing and services, there is still great scope for more private investment? Will he examine in particular the concept of the tax-exempt bond, along the lines of the industrial revenue bonds that have worked successfully in America?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that there is scope for more encouragement of new investment and start-up business in inner-city areas. That is why we are working so closely in many ways with Business in the Community, Investment in Industry and the clearing banks, and with the task force areas in particular, to try to boost investment. I am familiar with the tax-exempt bonds used in the United States. My hon. Friend will no doubt address questions on that to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, too. I am not sure that the tax relief policies of the United States would automatically command support here.

Mr. Madden: Is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster aware that while he and Lord Young have been conspiring to get control of the Prime Minister's inner-city campaign, that campaign has died a death? Will he confirm that unless the Government are prepared to inject substantial new money into rebuilding inner cities, such as Bradford, private investment will not have the confidence to be forthcoming? When will he revive the campaign and inject substantial new money so that the important job of rebuilding our inner cities can get under way?

Mr. Clarke: I thought that public interest in a non-existent campaign by my noble Friend and myself had died a death. No such campaign is taking place. The Government's inner-city policy—the urban development corporations, the city action teams and the inner-city task forces—is going ahead with great strength. More than 200 private sector firms are collaborating with our 16 inner-city task forces in projects of all kinds.

Mr. Holt: Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to refute the statement by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) by pointing out to him that £100 million of private investment has been put into Teesside development corporation in the 10 weeks since it was established?

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly confirm that. There is very widespread support in Teesside for the work that is beginning in the urban development corporation area. We are backing the Cleveland youth business centre, and that idea is now making very reasonable progress, with private sector and public sector funds going into the project.

Mr. Cohen: It is appalling that the answer to the question is that the information is not available, especially

as the Minister is personally in charge of the inner-city task force and, as I am led to believe, gives his personal endorsement to every scheme. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many organisations—particularly chambers of commerce, chambers of trade and local authorities — are highly critical of the Government's unco-ordinated piecemeal approach to the inner-city and urban regeneration policies? What exactly is happening on the Government side? *The Daily Telegraph* on Monday said:

"Thatcher set to appoint Inner Cities Minister."

Who is now co-ordinating the policy? The Prime Minister seems to be setting up yet another Ministry for the inner cities. Will the Chancellor tell us the exact position with regard to the co-ordination of inner-city policies? Who has control?.

Mr. Clarke: No Government have ever kept statistics on a separate inner-city basis of the kind that have been asked for. I certainly agree that there is a case for considering whether we should keep statistics on that basis. We have always had the support of chambers of commerce and we have had the support of growing numbers of private sector companies. I have had discussions with the CBI, and I am already working with Business in the Community. Since the election most local authorities, too, have been working with us on inner-city policy.

On the last question, the hon. Gentleman knows that the Prime Minister is co-ordinating the Government's inner-city policy, which is consuming a great deal of effort and many resources in a large number of Government Departments.

Financial Fraud

4. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff his Department's companies investigations department employs; and if he will make a statement on its investigation of financial fraud.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Francis Maude): The current figure for staff in post in the companies investigation branch of my Department is 53—a 50 per cent. increase during the past 12 months.

The branch's own investigators are mainly engaged in fact-finding inquiries under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985, but the branch also acts as a point of reference within my Department for non-departmental inspectors appointed to carry out investigations under sections 431, 432, 442, and 446 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that in recent years record numbers of overseas banks, financial institutions and companies have come to the City of London to raise funds and that they have received an extremely efficient and effective service from the City? Is he aware that they respect the integrity of the companies that operate in the City, and that that is of immense benefit for invisible exports in our balance of payments?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Every financial centre depends on maintaining and enhancing its level of business and on showing itself to be a safe and clean place to do business. The City of London is showing itself to be just that.

Mr. Bermingham: Bearing in mind recent history in the City, and as the special fraud squad has been created under the Director of Public Prosecutions, is it not time for closer liaison between the two departments to ensure the speedy prosecution of fraudsters?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that close co-ordination is important. Indeed, that already exists at a hitherto unknown level, with the precise object of ensuring that investigations are completed swiftly. The results are processed quickly so that, if prosecutions are desirable and necessary, they can be got under way at the earliest possible opportunity.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree that in the investigation and prosecution of modern, highly sophisticated fraud the authorities are rather like a penny-farthing bumbling about in the jet age? Will he therefore fight the Treasury to ensure that those departments have the latest examples of information technology, which will be an advantage in speeding up the process of justice for both the defence and the prosecution?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is right to say that it is essential that regulators and those concerned with the enforcement of the law are sufficiently well manned and equipped to match the challenges that they face. The serious fraud office, which is now being set up, will operate on a multi-disciplinary basis and a number of professional people will be involved. It is important that it has access to all the equipment and personnel that it needs.

Energy Costs

5. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the effect of energy costs on industry's competitiveness.

Mr. Butcher: On average, energy costs account for 3 per cent. of industrial gross output. The impact of changes in energy costs on competitiveness depends on a variety of factors, including the movement of other costs.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister accept that, until the commission reports, the news on today's tapes that British Gas charges to industrial competitors have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is welcome? Does he further accept that the recent announcement of increases in electricity charges is of considerable concern to industry as it will add £1 billion to its costs?

In future, will the Minister ensure that the priorities of industries have some bearing in these matters? When will the eight detailed questions asked by the director general of the Confederation of British Industry be answered?

Mr. Butcher: I share the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the referral announced at half-past 10 this morning. It is right that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should consider the prices for contract gas supplies, and we look forward to its report. I am aware that energy costs are a controversial matter that is continuously focused upon, in particular by the manufacturing sector. Even after the proposed increases, our prices will be at the lower end of the range of world prices.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that the proposed increases in electricity charges will be a severe disadavantage to British manufacturing industry, especially the chemical industry? Does he realise that in recent years production has increased directly as energy prices

have fallen in real terms? Does he further accept that if the increases are allowed to go through British industry will be placed at a disadvantage compared with its European competitors?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend makes a valid point when she says that some industries, especially the intensive energy users, are significantly affected by movements in energy prices. But, in the generality, the proposed increase will account for no more than one sixth of 1 per cent. of industry's costs, and prices for industrial consumers have fallen by more than 15 per cent. in real terms during the past five years.

To answer the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I am sure that she will be as pleased as I am that the qualifying industrial consumer scheme, introduced in October 1986, will continue to give intensive users a price reduction averaging 6 per cent.

Mr. Crowther: Does the Minister accept that to talk about generalities of 3 per cent. is no great consolation to the energy-intensive industries, such as steel, coal, aluminium and chemicals, in which energy costs may account for as much as 25 per cent. of production costs? What will the Department do to protect those industries from the enormous electricity price increases that will take effect from next April? Does he accept that Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that British manufacturers are not placed at a competitive disadvantage?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard the second part of my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). For the reasons that he cited, we are pleased that the qualifying industrial consumer scheme will continue to help those who have high energy-intensive production processes.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend should not accept the Opposition's statements without reminding us of their record in government. Is it not a fact—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members do not like it. Is it not fact that, under the Labour Government, electricity prices increased by 112 per cent.? Yet they are complaining about a 3 per cent. increase. Is it not a fact that gas prices increased by 28 per cent. in real terms, yet they have the gall to criticise the Government for increasing prices only modestly?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend speaks with the directness and candour of an ex-miner, and I welcome his comments. His figures are correct. Under the Labour Administration the price increases were almost exactly twice as high as they have been under this Administration.

Mr. Blair: Instead of standing there and supporting the attempt by his colleagues in other Departments to get industry and the consumer to bear the cost of saving the Government's face on their privatisation programme, which is what this is about—the country knows that, even if Conservative Members do not—why will the Minister and his colleagues not fight for British industry in the Cabinet instead of selling it down the river?

Mr. Butcher: For many years we have been defending the interests of the British manufacturing sector, to the extent that our industries are better placed than their international competitors. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has introduced policies that will ensure that the Conservative Administration in the year 2000 will be presiding over an economy that is still underpinned by a cost-effective and efficient energy industry.

Space Spending

6. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations his Department has received on Britain's space spending.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received letters from hon. and right hon. Members, space companies, interested organisations and members of the public. I and other Ministers have had several meetings with representatives of the aerospace industry.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a further symptom of complete despair to learn that the director general of the National Space Centre recently resigned? Is the Minister concerned that it is expected that during next year there will be a reduction of 40 per cent. in contracts related to the industry?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is bang up to date with events. The former director of the British National Space Centre resigned early in August of this year. Up to that time he had been criticising the way in which the European Space Agency programme had been going increasingly towards grandiose manned space projects, so it cannot have come altogether as a surprise to Mr. Gibson, the gentleman who resigned, that we exercised our option not to join in those projects at the meeting at The Hague.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government have a duty to examine the value for money that we receive from the funds that we put into space research? The European Space Agency's plan to put a French midget into space hardly seems productive.

Mr. Clarke: I have heard comments of that kind that are related to the design of the proposed spacecraft. It is an optional programme, and other countries appear to have decided to go to the next phase of developing a spaceship that does not seem to have adequate scientific or technological advantages for us. We put our money in other aspects of space work. As a country we invest £4·5 billion in scientific and technological investments of one type or another.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Chancellor nevertheless accept that, since his announcement that we will not support the next phase of the ESA programme, there has been genuine concern amongst the hundreds of companies in Britain that are involved in the space programme that the consequences of that decision will be to cut them off from valuable future orders? Given that there is a three-month period in which the decision can be reviewed, will the Minister listen to the representations that are made to him? I accept that the criticisms that he has made of the programme may be valid, but we should be arguing within the programme rather than hurling abuse from outside it.

Mr. Clarke: Most of the representations that are reaching us come from companies that hope to participate in contracts using the money that the Government were putting in. We do not put money in merely to hand it on to a British company. A project must be evaluated in terms of its long-term potential to the economy as a whole, to

see whether sufficient technological and scientific advantages will flow from it to people other than the companies that are directly concerned. We are receiving representations from companies and I am having meetings with several of them. If they can satisfy me that there is some valid national interest to be had from taking part in parts of the space industry, we shall of course do so.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that, now that we are not providing extra funds for the ESA, extra money will be found from Government sources for the continuation of the HOTOL project?

Mr. Clarke: I have had yet another meeting to discuss the HOTOL project with British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce. We must look for other international collaborators and see what the next step is if we are to continue to evaluate the project. This is a long-term matter, and it will have to be considered carefully once we have found what other industrial and governmental partners we might be able to collect for it.

Mr. Stott: I am sure that the Minister now realises that his decision to do nothing has presented us with the worst possible scenario. Will he tell us what he will do with the 300 firms that are now investing their own private money in space research and related activities? How does he see that money being used in the future? Are the Government expecting the private sector to make up the gap between what the Government would normally put in and the position now, and if so, what mechanism do the Government propose to use to ensure that those private funds are put into the programme?

Mr. Clarke: We are already spending more than £100 million each year on our space programme, which is not doing nothing, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested. We have declined to spend £200 million a year on a project to put Europeans—probably Frenchmen—into orbit by the year 2000. That does not have adequate advantages. We are now examining what other projects might be of industrial advantage to us, and what participation the private sector is prepared to contemplate to obtain commercial advantages for itself. Those discussions are continuing.

Departmental Budget

8. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the main priorities for his Department's budget for 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The main priorities for my Department's budget in 1987-88 were set out in the last public expenditure White Paper and were reflected in the Supply Estimates and Supplementary Estimates for 1987-88. All of these have been presented to Parliament.

Mr. Douglas: May we have some assurance from the Minister that these priorities are set against the real needs of the United Kingdom as a whole? May we have an assurance that there will be a review of regional policy, because, while we might expect work to be done in the inner cities, there is a great deal of work needed to correct the imbalance between the north and the south of the United Kingdom? Aid needs to be given to mining areas, such as my own area in Fife, that have been in decline for a long time because of pit closures and because of other aspects of the recession.

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly give the assurance that our increased budget will be devoted to the priorities of the United Kingdom as a whole and to all its industry and commerce. We are reviewing the objectives and policies of our Department and will give a detailed statement on that in due course. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that it is not our intention to reduce the expenditure that we incur in the assisted areas either north or south of the border.

Mr. William Powell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the administration of regional funds in the assisted area of Corby has been an outstanding success, and that the lessons to be learnt from that could be applied to other assisted areas in which aid should be concentrated in future?

Mr. Clarke: We take great encouragement from what has occurred in Corby, where the local community has taken advantage of what is on offer and of the state of the British economy to establish a great deal of new employment and a new economic base for the town. To a certain extent the same thing has happened in Consett, Scunthorpe and other places hit by steel closures. Obviously, that is the kind of thing that we all want to see in all parts of the country that have been most adversely affected in the last 10 years by rapid industrial change.

Mr. Radice: Can the Minister tell the House when the Government will publish their review of regional policy?

Mr. Clarke: As I said, we are reviewing the policies of our entire Department. I have no doubt that some time next year we shall come forward with our conclusions.

Motor Cars

9. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the United Kingdom motor car market was taken by British-made cars in the first eight months of the current year; and how this compares with the last three years' performance of the United Kingdom motor industry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): British-made cars took 49 per cent. of the United Kingdom car market in the first eight months of this year, compared with 43, 41 and 43 per cent. for the corresponding period of the previous three years.

Mr. Curry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Rover Group has fully shared in this progress and that he will therefore be reinforced in his determination to privatise that company as soon as practicable?

Mr. Atkins: I am as encouraged as is my hon. Friend by the news that Austin-Rover's total sales at home and abroad in the first half of this year increased by nearly 3 per cent. over the same period in 1986. Together with a 15 per cent. increase in export sales, that is particularly welcome and, clearly, will certainly not harm the prospects of the Austin-Rover Group when it comes to privatisation.

Mr. Hoyle: Conservative Members are fond of quoting statistics about the Labour Government. Does the Minister not know that in 1979 foreign imports accounted for only 38 per cent.? This year they are accounting for 50 per cent. and in September United Kingdom car sales were down by 15 per cent. How can this be a success story?

Mr. Atkins: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that the penetration of foreign vehicles into Britain has declined in

recent months. That is a sign of the impressive performance by the British car industry and by the component industry, which is so important to it.

Sir Ian Lloyd: In view of the complex interdependence of the modern motor car industry, which I am sure my hon. Friend understands only too well, do the terms "British made" and "Foreign made" have any real significance, and what does the term "British made" mean today?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is as informed on these matters as I am—*[Interruption.]*—and he makes a good point about the country of origin of cars. Certainly we have noticed in recent months and years a reduction in foreign penetration. As I said, we take a continuing interest in making sure that the component sourcing from the United Kingdom is on the increase. We shall continue to do that.

Mr. Cryer: Is it not true that British Leyland has been rescued from its private enterprise fate-worse-than-death by billions of pounds of taxpayers' money, and that the people of Britain would find it extremely offensive if, after having rescued this firm, it is slimmed down yet again and sold off? Is it not the truth that British Leyland is barely holding its market share and that, with only about 18 per cent. of the United Kingdom market, it cannot survive?

Mr. Atkins: Many hon. Members will recognise that there has been a great improvement in the performance of the Rover Group, partly as a result of the vast sums of taxpayers' money that have been put into the company. All hon. Members recognise that that success story should be told worldwide. That does not necessarily mean, however, that all hon. Members would agree with the hon. Gentleman in saying that we should not return the company to the private sector as soon as practicable.

Textile Industry

10. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received about the impact of United States protectionist measures on the British textile industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: My colleagues and I have received a number of representations about the United States Textile and Apparel Trade Bill currently before Congress. The Government have repeatedly made clear their concern about this proposed Bill, and the European Community has warned that it will respond to any restrictive United States measures in accordance with its rights under the GATT.

Mr. Waller: If the American Trade Bill is enacted, would it not heighten international trade tensions and undermine the whole progress of the GATT and multilateral negotiations? Will my hon. Friend therefore emphasise the fact that if the measure is passed the Government and the European Community as a whole will not hesitate to act with firmness to ensure that the diversion of trade does not harm our industry?

Mr. Clark: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. This would be an acutely damaging measure if passed. We and the European Commission have repeatedly made our views clear on that. My right hon. and learned Friend and I saw the United States trade representative Clayton Yeutter only last week and repeated our concerns to him.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the Minister and his colleagues start to speak out on this issue rather than whisper in dark corners? This has been a very important issue for the textile industry for a long time and we hear too little from Ministers protecting our textile industry.

Mr. Clark: I have heard the House of Commons called a number of things in recent weeks, but a "dark corner" has not been one of them. The negotiations would have to be conducted by the European Commission. At present the Bill has not been passed by Congress and we are lobbying very strongly in Washington to ensure that it will not be passed. It is a matter of judgment whether national agitation at this time would be likely to inflame or moderate Congressional attitudes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend accept that protectionism measures implemented by the United States of America would be particularly damaging to the textile and allied industries, many of which are located not only in inner-city areas but in other areas where there are currently economic problems? Such a measure would reduce investment in those industries and have a direct impact on employment in those areas. Will he therefore take this matter—as hon. Members on both sides of the House are urging—very seriously and ensure that the diversion of trade which could result will not have an unfair impact on this country?

Mr. Clark: I am glad of the opportunity that my hon. Friend gives me to repeat the very serious concern with which we view this prospect. As my hon. Friend is a powerful advocate in this area, he knows only too well that the multi-fibre arrangement provides a skeletal structure, which allows us to safeguard our industries. Essentially, the defence must be mounted through the GATT by the European Commission. The Commission is minded to do that in the strongest possible manner.

Mr. Haynes: By the way, happy birthday, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that I recognise the work that he put in during the last renegotiation of the multi-fibre arrangement? However, will he now get stuck into the Yanks and stop the American imports, in the interests of the British textile industry, especially in my constituency?

Mr. Clark: The problem with protectionist measures is that they are directed against our exports. I appreciate the tribute paid to me by the hon. Gentleman, but if he has a particular problem with imports from the United States I will see what I can do if he draws it to my attention.

Manufacturing Industry

11. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for the productivity of manufacturing industry; and what comparable figures he has on the recent performance of the United Kingdom's major competitors.

Mr. Butcher: In the year to the third quarter of 1987 productivity in manufacturing industry, as measured by output per man, increased by 6·9 per cent. In the year to the second quarter of 1987, the most recent period for which international comparisons are available, productivity in manufacturing industry increased by 6·5 per cent. in the

United Kingdom. This was the fastest increase achieved by any of the major seven industrialised countries and compares with an average increase for the major seven countries of 2·7 per cent.

Mr. Cran: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that if he checks the record he will find that under the last Labour Government the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the productivity league of all the industrial countries? Does he agree that the future competitiveness of British industry and British manufacturing vitally depends upon individual British companies maintaining control of unit labour costs, which under the last Labour Government went through the roof?

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom's average growth rate was only 1½ per cent. between 1970 and 1980. In that period we were at the bottom of the productivity league of major industrialised nations. That contrasts with this decade in which the average growth rate has been over 5 per cent. and we have been at the top of the league. In regard to costs, of course we have to maintain our healthy obsession with unit wage costs and all unit costs. If we can keep that going until well into the 1990s, we shall have a very favourable outlook indeed.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister encourage industry to plough back the improvement in productivity into investment in manufacturing, which is still showing a decline in areas such as the north? Investment needs to be — *[Interruption.]* I am only going on last month's figures. Investment in manufacturing needs to be increased, so that areas such as the north can benefit from increased investment and increased growth, so that we may put the hundreds of thousands of people who are still out of work back to work.

Mr. Butcher: As a northern Member, I hope that the hon. Lady will have drawn much comfort from the fact that the manufacturing sector is now spearheading our economic growth. It is growing faster than the general level of the economy.

Mr. Tim Smith: Are not the encouraging figures that my hon. Friend has given to the House further evidence that the enterprise culture is well established in many parts of the United Kingdom? Will my hon. Friend make it his overriding objective——

Mr. Cryer: Two million jobs have gone.

Mr. Smith: Shut up.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman does not like the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions are to the Minister, not to the Bench below the Gangway.

Mr. Smith: Will my hon. Friend make it his overriding policy objective to ensure that the enterprise culture is established throughout the United Kingdom? We have the conditions for further investment, further productivity growth and more jobs.

Mr. Butcher: I can understand the antagonism of some Opposition Members towards the enterprise culture, because the arrival of the enterprise culture in some of their constituencies could well mean that they will lose their seats to the Conservative party. In regard to the sedentary question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please do not answer sedentary questions.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister aware that increased productivity and increased investment frequently lead to fewer jobs in industries such as the textile industry? If more jobs are to be created, which I assume we all desire, there has to be a buoyant market for the products, so that their improved competitiveness can result in increased sales. If the United States puts on an embargo on our goods, is it not true that goods intended to be imported into the United States from many other countries will be diverted to Britain? That will result in the market here being less buoyant. There will be fewer jobs and the investment in productivity will have been for nothing.

Mr. Butcher: To take the last question first, it confirms that we are right to be concerned to see the continuation of the open trading market internationally. That is a prime objective of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On productivity and job loss, productivity gains are the friends and precursors of increased employment, as the Japanese experience demonstrates. I hope that we shall no longer be sidetracked by the myth that increasing productivity equals job losses. It means gains in income to United Kingdom plc and therefore gains in jobs.

Fylde Coast Area

12. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake a review of the impact on the Fylde coast area resulting from the removal of assisted area status.

Mr. Atkins: No, Sir.

Mr. Jack: Because of my hon. Friend's deep knowledge, care and concern for the affairs of Lancashire, I am sure he will realise that I and the other hon. Members serving the Fylde coast area are still deeply concerned about the level of unemployment. Does he agree that the key to reducing that is the starting of the second phase of the Peel industrial estate? The problems relating to English Industrial Estates in that venture mean that progress has been non-existent. Can his Department offer any hope of further options or ideas to enable industrial development to start in that area?

Mr. Atkins: As my hon. Friend is fully aware, as a fellow Lancashire Member I understand the problems of that part of my hon. Friend's constituency. I have written to him making it clear that any involvement of English Industrial Estates must be dependent upon its being able to recover its costs. Since that letter I have been able to explore the possibility of further options and discuss them with my hon. Friend. If he cares to come to see me I am sure that we can find a way out of the problem.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Fylde coast regularly has the highest unemployment in Lancashire? While I am grateful for what he has just said about the Peel industrial estate, will he consider, rather than diverting the land to retail industries — which would be contrary to the structure plan and contrary to policies of the Department of the Environment — whether it might be appropriate to encourage English Industrial Estates to divest itself of that part of the estate that has been partly developed so that it can be further developed by other companies?

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend, as ever, represents the interest of his constituents extremely well. His suggestion is one of the options that we shall consider.

National Newspapers (Competition)

13. **Mr. Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received following the acquisition of a 14·7 per cent. stake in the Pearson group by News International; and if he will make a statement on competition policy for national newspapers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Eight letters have been received by my Department, including one from the hon. Gentleman. Major newspaper mergers are regulated by special provisions in the Fair Trading Act 1973, and we shall rigorously examine all applications for consent which are put to us.

Mr. Bruce: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that there is real anxiety among people working in the *Financial Times* at the implications of the acquisition of a 14·7 per cent. stake in the parent corporation by Rupert Murdoch's company? Does he accept that the increasing concentration of ownership of the British national press has reached a level which cannot be in the best interests of the freedom of the press? Is it not time the Government came forward with a review of the right way to deal with competition and ensure that we have a free national press?

Mr. Clarke: The matter would come to a head only if any attempt were made to acquire a controlling interest in the newspaper and in the group, which would trigger the provisions of the Fair Trading Act. That would involve the ability to own or control about 25 per cent. of the votes cast at a general meeting of the company. If that were to happen, the special newspaper provisions of the Fair Trading Act would come into play. My right hon. and noble Friend has already indicated that we are seeking to improve the workings of that part of the Act. We are asking the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report back more quickly when references are made, and we are looking at ways in which this part of the Act can be made to work more effectively.

Mr. Aitken: While recognising that Mr. Murdoch's description of himself as a friendly investor in the *Financial Times* gives a new and bloodcurdling meaning to that phrase, in all seriousness may I ask whether my right hon. and learned Friend accepts that there is an important public interest dimension to this which demands a firm assurance from the Government? Will my right hon. and learned Friend promise the House that in the event of Mr. Murdoch making a takeover bid for the *Financial Times*, the necessary Government consent under the Fair Trading Act will be debated in the House before a final ministerial decision is made, and not afterwards, as happened in such a shameful way in the cases of *Today*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Times*? We must have decisions taken here first.

Mr. Clarke: I recognise that my hon. Friend is always a friendly questioner on the subject of this and similar acquisitions. I am being reasonably forthcoming on hypothetical questions which would arise only if Mr. Murdoch sought to exercise control over this newspaper. The Fair Trading Act 1973 covers that situation. I understand what the views of hon. Members on both sides of the House will be if this occurs and I assure my hon. Friend that we shall apply the Act as it is intended to be applied.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister recall the takeover of the *Today* newspaper earlier this year, which the Government meekly accepted, like lambs? This gave Mr. Murdoch 35 per cent. control over the popular press in this country. The triumvirate of Maxwell, Murdoch and Stevens controls over 80 per cent. of the popular press. Two hundred weeklies come under the control of Mr. Murdoch. Is this not a fearful control over ideas, opinions and attitudes? Should it not be prevented, and should the Government not operate a proper anti-monopoly policy?

Mr. Clarke: The special provisions of the Act do not apply, and were never intended to apply, where there is financial urgency. In the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers there was an imminent threat of the newspaper closing. It had only a small circulation. I cannot answer hypothetical questions, but the hon. Gentleman must ask himself whether that situation could apply to any attempted acquisition of the *Financial Times*. It is on that basis that we shall decide whether the Fair Trading Act applies and whether reference should be made to the MMC. No application for consent has been made, so there is a limit to how forthcoming I can be.

Mr. Dykes: Although I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), which received great support from both sides of the House, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that there is a big difference between a minority stake, which is equivalent to raising money or gaining financial support, or a rights issue, and seeking to intervene in the affairs of a newspaper? Will my right hon. and learned Friend undertake to ensure that the *Financial Times*, a masterpiece of objectivity and balance, remains truly independent?

Mr. Clarke: I share my hon. Friend's admiration for the *Financial Times*, which is one of this country's strongest journals and has a great international reputation. We shall have a duty to address the Act if anyone attempts to acquire a controlling interest. My hon. Friend can rely on Ministers to take their duties seriously if such an event occurs.

Leicester

14. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for providing increased support for the traditional industries of Leicester.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and noble Friend and I are looking at the whole range of the Department's policies to ensure that they are effectively targeted on the areas and on the people that most need assistance.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister admitting that the traditional industries of Leicester and cities like it are in decline? Is he aware that the Government's policies of removing protection from workers and reducing the number of factory inspectors has led to intolerable sweatshop conditions, and that even the Government are investigating this? When will they provide the support that these industries need to bring back prosperity to a city which, when they came to power, was the second wealthiest in Europe and today is suffering greatly from unemployment and misery?

Mr. Atkins: I recently opened an exhibition of the wool and knitting industries, of which there are many representatives in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency. They spoke in glowing terms about the success of their traditional industries and felt that the serious problems facing them could be overcome with the continued support of the Government both at home and abroad.

National Consumer Council

15. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet the National Consumer Council.

Mr. Maude: I shall be meeting the National Consumer Council on 1 March 1988.

Mr. Fatchett: Perhaps the Minister could bring that date forward and take the opportunity to discuss with the NCC its recent report on security risks and personal loans, which illustrates one of the worst characteristics of the so-called enterprise culture. Is the Minister aware that that report showed the use of deliberately deceitful advertising on loans and high brokerage charges? It also showed that many people, often in extremely difficult financial circumstances, were putting their own homes at risk because of the nature of this loan business. Is it not about time that the Government acted against those sharks?

Mr. Maude: We are already consulting on proposals to change advertisement regulations and will be issuing revised regulations soon after further consultations. Those regulations will require credit-granters to make it clear in the advertisements that if a secured loan is being offered the borrower's home is placed at risk. It is right that that should be done. However, that does not remove the burden that must lie with anyone seeking credit to look carefully at the terms of the loan that he is seeking and to shop around to get the best possible deal.

Mr. Gow: What injury would be done to the progress of mankind if the National Consumer Council were to be abolished?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend has asked a fascinating hypothetical question to which I will not venture an answer at this stage.

Primary Health Care

3.30 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the Government's plans for improving the primary health care services. Those plans are set out in the White Paper entitled "Promoting Better Health", which has been published today. Copies are available from the Vote Office.

The primary care services — those provided outside hospitals by family doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians, community nurses and others — account for nine tenths of all patient contacts with the National Health Service. They cost over £5,000 million a year.

In 1986 the Government set out their proposals for improving primary care. They attracted over 2,000 written comments and were the subject of public consultation meetings chaired by Ministers in different parts of the country. We are grateful to all those who commented, and to the Social Services Committee of this House for its constructive report published earlier this year. The White Paper includes a detailed response to that report.

The consultations showed a wide measure of support for the Government proposals, in particular for placing the promotion of better health at the centre of the stage. The White Paper shows clearly the amount of preventable disease in this country, and it contains many proposals for tackling this problem. Those include the setting of targets for family doctors to achieve higher levels of vaccination, immunisation and cervical cytology screening; more health promotion sessions in general practice; a greater role in health education for pharmacists; regular health checks for particular groups, such as the under-fives and elderly people; a new contract for dentists which will encourage prevention; an extension of the primary care team to include chiropodists, physiotherapists and others and action to see that the skills of community nurses are better used, in connection with which we are issuing today a circular to English health authorities advising on the steps to be taken following the Cumberlege report on community nursing.

To achieve those aims we shall be making general practitioners' contracts more sensitive to actual performance and will look to family practitioner committees to monitor more vigorously the contracts they have with family doctors. The White Paper also emphasises the needs of the consumer of primary care services. In particular, it sets out ways of giving people much more information with which to choose their practitioner and of making it easier for people to change doctor. It also provides improvements in complaints procedures.

The various measures that the White Paper sets out — which include also compulsory retirement for the older doctors and dentists and more effective improvement of primary care premises — will affect all parts of the country. We expect them to bring particular benefits to inner cities and other deprived areas. In addition, the White Paper sets out the Government's intentions for improvements specific to such areas, for example by paying particular attention to their dental, pharmaceutical and community nursing services.

All primary care professionals have a part to play in the improvements we seek, and the White Paper describes our intentions for each part of the service. The Government have already made provision for a large increase in expenditure on the family practitioner services, and are prepared to invest substantially more on top of that. In many cases, the actual amount will depend on the outcome of the negotiations that will now take place with each of the practitioner professions. The White Paper makes clear our intention to proceed quickly with the introduction of blood glucose testing strips for diabetics, which I believe will be widely welcomed in the House.

Expenditure on family practitioner services has already risen by £1·5 billion, or 43 per cent. in real terms, since 1978-79. That is reflected, for example, in the increase of nearly 4,000 to over 30,000 in the number of general practitioners, and a consequent fall from over 2,200 to fewer than 2,000 in the average number of patients on each doctor's list. To achieve the strategic development set out in the White Paper will mean giving still greater priority to these services as a whole, and we have therefore thought it right also to look carefully at priorities within them. We have concluded that it is reasonable to secure some additional resources for development by asking those who can afford it to pay for sight tests and to meet somewhat more of the overall cost of dental care, through a system of proportional charges extending also to examination costs, for which at present no charge is made. The proportional charge system will be simpler, and will relate patient charges more directly to the costs of the particular treatment. It will benefit regular attenders who look after their teeth, some of whom will have no increase or may even pay a little less. Current exemptions from dental charges will, of course, continue for children, adults on low income, expectant and nursing mothers and certain other groups. NHS sight tests will remain free for children, those on low income, the blind and partially sighted and other specified categories.

Existing plans already provide for additional expenditure by 1990-91 of some £570 million in real terms. That will be further increased by the substantial extra resources that the Government will make available to finance the improvements that I have described today. Towards the additional expenditure as a whole, the extra payments which people will make towards dental care and sight testing will contribute some £170 million by 1990-91.

The necessary legislative provisions, together with other health measures, are contained in a Bill which will also be published today. The proposals in the White Paper and the Bill will generally apply throughout the United Kingdom, but my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, will be considering the ways in which certain of our proposals will require to be adapted to the particular circumstances of those countries.

Our proposals will enable people to make more informed choices of practitioner, will give them access to higher quality services and, above all, will place the greatest emphasis on preventing illness and promoting positive good health. I believe that it is a strategy that will be widely welcomed and supported.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Minister praised the constructive report of the Select Committee. I would find his flattery more sincere if in the past half hour I had been able to find a single case in which he accepted a single recommendation from the Select Committee in which it differed from the consultative document.

Why, in particular, has the Minister rejected the unanimous recommendation that he re-examine the integration of the family practitioner committees that run the GPs with the district health authorities that supply the community nurses with whom they are supposed to work? What is the point of expressing pious hopes that health professionals will work together as a team, when he has decided to keep the administrators playing in two separate teams? If he seriously expects family practitioner committees to monitor "more vigorously" the quality of primary care, why is his Department choosing this year to cut their administrative budgets, and why have the committees been told to expect more staff cuts next year? Is the Minister aware that they are expected to shed 600 posts by next March, that Birmingham has suspended all planning functions, that East Sussex has stopped monitoring general practitioners' claims, and that Kingston has halted all inspections of GPs' surgeries? How does he expect us to believe that this small, shrinking band of administrators can make a reality of more vigorous monitoring?

The Minister will be aware that his proposals will be judged on how they remedy the most serious failings of primary care in the inner cities, where large numbers of the elderly, the unemployed and the homeless place special demands upon it. Will he acknowledge that those pressures are being increased month by month by the persistent closure of accident and emergency units, 15 of which have closed in London alone? How will those pressures be helped by payment by performance, which may draw more GPs away from the cities to areas such as Braintree, where it may well be easier for them to hit his targets?

How does the Minister imagine that it will help the chronic problem of crowded, crumbling surgeries in the inner cities to privatise the General Practice Finance Corporation, a proposal to which he did not refer but which is to be found in his White Paper? Is he not aware that that is a rare source of funds for new premises in unfashionable areas where banks will not lend? Why, given the deep public concern about them, does neither his statement nor the White Paper even mention the appalling quality of the deputising services?

Is the Minister further aware that studies suggest that the average consulting time per patient of only six minutes is lower in Britain than almost anywhere else in Europe? Why, then, is he proposing to increase the capitation element to encourage GPs to compete for even longer patient lists? Does he not appreciate that, if he wants to improve the quality of care, he should be encouraging GPs to have shorter lists, not even longer ones?

Finally, the Minister will have anticipated that we unreservedly condemn his proposal to charge for dental examinations and for eyesight tests. Does he recall that in the consultative document there was no reference to charges for eyesight tests and that professional bodies have been unable to comment on the proposal? Even solicitors will still give clients free advice — and will now come cheaper than these NHS services.

How does the Minister imagine that he is encouraging preventive care by discouraging patients from visiting their dentists? Has he forgotten that, when dental charges went up by 25 per cent., the number of fillings fell by 5 million? Is he aware that one in 20 people calling for an eyesight test are referred on for medical examination for conditions such as glaucoma, which can be arrested if caught early enough? How many of them will be deterred by a tenner a test?

To the extent that today's proposals will oblige GPs to give priority not to their most needed services but to their most profitable ones, we wholly reject them. The Opposition will fight to preserve a Health Service that is publicly funded, publicly run and free to the public at the time they need it.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should take the last two points first and make it clear that in our view the proposed charges for dental examinations and the proportional system, which in some cases will have the effect of reducing treatment charges, are a sensible move towards generating the additional resources that we can then devote to exactly the purposes that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) outlined in his first questions. We wish to have more money to direct to the improvement of primary care in the inner cities. We wish also to develop the role of the family practitioner committees along exactly the same lines that the hon. Gentleman, too, would wish. In the remote likelihood of the hon. Gentleman ever being a Minister, he would have to face up to the need to find the resources to achieve those desirable objectives. We have tried to face up to that need.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the proposal that family practitioner committees and district health authorities should once again be merged. Whatever may be the merits of the arguments that were fought over in 1982 when the present set-up was introduced, I cannot believe that it is in the interests of any part of the Health Service to have yet another administrative upheaval on top of those that it has already been through. However these authorities were organised, it would be essential to have proper co-ordination. In my view, it is right to concentrate on achieving proper co-ordination, and that is what we are seeking to do by many of these proposals.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about capitation fees. I make the simple point that, with a given number of doctors and a given number of patients, it is impossible for lists to become longer on average. Higher capitation fees will give doctors the incentive, among many others that we are proposing, to provide good treatment to their patients so that they will attract patients against a background of wider choice. The core of our proposals on general practitioners is to change the remuneration system to give greater incentives to those who provide the things that I outlined at the beginning of my statement — more screening programmes, more health promotion sessions and systematic surveillance of the health needs of under-fives and the very elderly. We all wish to see those things brought about.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is my hon. Friend aware that the eye test is a screening procedure and that many serious illnesses such as diabetes, glaucoma and cancer can be detected at an early stage? Therefore, does he really think that it would be cost effective to deter people from seeking eye tests because they would have to pay £10? Any person in some difficulty with their sight might well be told, on going to see their doctor, to have their eyes tested and that it would cost £10 at an optician but nothing at a hospital. The hospital eye service is already under great strain. Therefore, does it make sense to direct more people to have their eyes tested at hospitals instead of at opticians?

Mr. Newton: I need hardly say that I respect my hon. Friend's views on those matters because of her direct knowledge of them and the views that she expressed when the voucher system was introduced some three or four years ago. The fears that were expressed about the introduction of the voucher system have proved unfounded. It has greatly extended competition, choice and consumer satisfaction. I believe that her fears about this further development will also prove unfounded.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): We do not welcome the statement. It is probably one of the most deterrent things that we have heard. Prevention is what we need, but that is not what we are getting. Charging for eye testing and the inspection of teeth will not assist prevention, as it will not be possible to detect diseases such as cancer if eyes are not tested. It will bring about a medical upheaval. Will pressure from drug companies reflect the advice given by pharmacists to their patients?

Mr. Newton: I see no reason to suppose that that latter fear has anything to do with what we are proposing. We have been strongly pressed by pharmacists, who are an important part of the primary health care professions, to help them extend their role in advising people about health matters and, not least, health education. They constitute a large range of outlets, with many people going to them frequently, where such information can be made available. We think that it is a sensible use of resources to encourage pharmacists to use that asset in the interests of health education generally.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): My hon. Friend said that it was his intention that general practitioners' contracts should be more sensitive to performance. Will this enable such GPs to do more preventive medicine or more diagnostics? It is my view that a great deal more diagnosis should be done in general practice, thus relieving out-patient departments. Does he also recognise that this must mean smaller patient lists for such GPs?

Mr. Newton: It may well be that that will lead to reduced patient lists. I said in my statement that they have fallen substantially during the past seven or eight years. The details of the new arrangements will clearly have to be negotiated with the professions, but the basic answer to my hon. Friend's question is that we shall be aiming through the new remuneration system to encourage the sort of things to which he rightly attaches importance.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Even at this stage, will the Minister think again about his decision to charge for eyesight tests and dental examinations? Does it not fly in the face of his policies on health education? Does he not see it as a colossal mistake?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not think that it does. The proposed charges contribute to our capacity to devote substantial additional resources to the promotion of good health and to the sort of measures outlined in the White Paper, which are directly related to improving the health of the nation. That is the basis on which the proposals have been put forward.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the document he has produced, which from what he says includes a large number of items to improve the health of the community. I thank him and our right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) for the enormous amount of time and trouble they put into consulting all sorts of people on the contents of the Green Paper before the present proposals were brought out.

My hon. Friend will be aware that nurses are particularly anxious to play a larger role in community health care and I wonder whether my hon. Friend will enlarge a little on the remarks in his statement referring to nurses. Has there been any development on the suggestions in the Green Paper that pharmacists may play a larger role, particularly in visiting patients for whom they have prescribed preparations?

Mr. Newton: In relation to pharmacists and still more in relation to the optical services, we are looking at ways to pay practitioners to make domiciliary visits to the housebound, which is undoubtedly a gap in present facilities. That is illustrative of the sort of things we can do with the extra resources.

On the matter of nurses, my hon. Friend will be aware that the Cumberlege report recommended the development of so-called neighbourhood nursing services. We believe that that needs to be actively examined around the country. We do not believe that we can lay down a blueprint for all areas regardless of their differing conditions, but there are already some good examples in practice that we believe other authorities could build on. We are anxious to improve the quality of the work done by nurses in general practitioners' practices. We are proposing to reimburse general practitioners directly for the training of practice nurses, which I think will be widely welcomed.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): How will the proposals in the paper ensure an improvement in the promotion of good mental health?

Mr. Newton: In the same way as they will seek to promote other forms of health — physical health. For example, one of the things for which we shall be able directly to reimburse general practitioners but for which we cannot at the moment, is the employment, alongside chiropodists, physiotherapists and other supporting staff, of staff who can provide counselling services at general practices. That has been pressed for many times and is directly related to the problem raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement, particularly the points on more accountability for general practitioners. Does he think that it is about time that consultants were more accountable and that their contracts should be with district health authorities rather than regional health authorities?

Mr. Newton: I think that I have covered enough delicate issues in my statement without going into that one.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of my colleagues in Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party, may I say that we do not like the underpinning philosophy of the White Paper, since it seems that the low income groups, which are often the most vulnerable in health conditions, are less likely to take up opportunities for testing if they have to pay?

May I pursue the Minister on the issue of cervical cytology? It is not clear within the White Paper whether the call and recall service will be part of the main contract.

Since that is one illness that could be prevented by effective screening, can he give us an assurance that that will be the case?

Mr. Newton: I should make it clear that all existing exemptions from charges continue to apply under the system that I have proposed, so I do not think that low-income people will be affected. As to cervical cytology screening, around the country we have set targets for the introduction of call and recall programmes. One matter about which I feel particularly strongly, as does my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, is that we must ensure that the response of women to being called or recalled is raised, which is just as important as having the system in place. That is what we shall be encouraging general practitioners to help to bring about.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Does my hon. Friend agree with the increasing demand on the Health Service through demographic and technological factors, that it is high time that primary health care provision was properly scrutinised? The right way to provide primary health care is by being effective, efficient and responsive to the demand of consumers and, at last, by ensuring that general practitioners are more cost-conscious. There has been a phenomenal increase in spending in family practitioner services. Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome for the recognition that he is giving other members of the primary health team —chiropodists, physiotherapists and district nurses?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the support that she has expressed.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Sam Galbraith.

An Hon. Member: A consultant.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): May I echo the call of the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) for consultants to be made accountable? I welcome certain parts of the White Paper, particularly that with regard to a retirement age of 70, and I hope that it is a prelude to the introduction of retirement at 65. I welcome the part of the report concerning more information for patients. This is not advertising; more information will benefit patients. However, I am sorry that the Minister is going the wrong way on the capitation fee. What he is proposing will lead to larger practices, when even general practitioners are asking for smaller ones. The Minister should have taken the opportunity to reduce the capitation fee below £1,700. Will any items for service payments be cash-limited? Will they be cash-limited in general, or will each item of service within that be cash-limited? Will such things as cervical cytology smears or tests for blood examinations be cash-limited?

Mr. Newton: I express my gratitude for the first part of the hon. Gentleman's comments—[AN HON. MEMBER: "About consultants?"] I shall leave consultants out of the matter for the moment, but I understand the direct interest of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) in these matters. The capitation fee issue should be considered alongside the introduction of specific incentives for the sort of particular purposes that I have outlined. There is no question of cash-limiting the tests that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. With regard to the sums that we shall make available for the further improvement of practice premises and for the additional employment of supporting staff of various kinds, we shall make specific sums available to family practitioner committees; they can decide what projects to support, and develop what is called their more "pro-active role" to encourage good services in their area.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): If my hon. Friend is to put a greater strain on general practitioners and increase their primary services, is he satisfied that they will be given sufficient equipment to carry that out?

Mr. Newton: Part of the purpose of the exercise is to achieve precisely that. I should make it clear that we are not seeking to increase the strain on general practitioners generally; we are seeking to increase the rewards of those who are already taking the strain and making a lot of effort, and to encourage those who are not doing that to do so.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will the Minister give an undertaking that he will convey to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland the need for a detailed statement on the implications of the statement and the White Paper for the National Health Service in Scotland, with particular reference to general practitioner services in highland and remote areas, where doctors are having to work in difficult circumstances? Will he ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to comment on the ophthalmic and dental charges, which will have a detrimental effect on the socially disadvantaged in urban and rural Scotland?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is present—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that in an appropriate way my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will want to make available any further information about the application of these proposals to Scotland. We all seek to discuss with the professions how we may give better support to doctors who are virtually forced to practise on their own in isolated rural areas. Clearly, that will be of even greater importance in Scotland than in many parts of England.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Does my hon. Friend believe that the measures that he has announced today will encourage more people to seek examination of their sight, which also covers incipient glaucoma and conditions like it, and have their teeth examined, or does he believe that the measures will discourage them? Will my hon. Friend say why he believes that the obvious discouragement to both will be beneficial to health? Does he not realise that there are many people on what are, by any standards, very low incomes who are above the threshold for free access to these facilities?

Mr. Newton: I have already said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that similar fears expressed about earlier changes have proved unfounded. It will be open to opticians to offer free sight tests, as they may wish to do in connection with their general business of selling spectacles, even though they will not be able formally to tie patients to buy spectacles from the same place. The advantages and forces of competition will mean that these proposals will not have the effect that my hon. Friend fears.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): In response to a moving letter from a constituent who lost her sight because of detectable glaucoma that was not detected in the early stages, I tabled a question to the Department asking for

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an extension of eye tests to the plotting of visual fields, which would be a more sophisticated and more effective technique. Is the Minister aware that the International Glaucoma Association thinks that 150,000 people already suffer from glaucoma which has not been detected? Although the statement contains many items of value, the decision to withdraw free eye tests will be seen as an act of crass, wasteful, cruel stupidity.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's views. I have already made it clear that I do not agree with him. I hope that I understood the first part of his question aright. I must point out that there is nothing in our proposals to restrict what is done in the course of an eye test.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my hon. Friend accept that, although many Conservative Members welcome any proposals to improve prevention, service and the range of choice, we must be sure that there will not be items of payment for services that encourage unnecessary activity, visits or referrals? The accent must be on a better deal and more choice for the patient.

Mr. Newton: Yes, and among other things we shall seek to ensure that general practitioners have better information about referral rates—for example, by other colleagues in the same area—and we hope that that will assist them in developing sensible practices.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the Minister accept that the White Paper is clear evidence of the Government's intention to continue to undermine the National Health Service and to move away from the concepts upon which it was based? Is he aware that testing in that sense is part of preventive medicine? Luckily, I was diagnosed in an eye test as having glaucoma. I am one of probably many thousands of people who have been grateful for the fact that such a test disclosed that illness. Is it not an act of absolute stupidity to end free tests when, in view of public opinion, medicine is following the course of prevention rather than cure?

Mr. Newton: The essential emphasis of the White Paper, as I think I made clear throughout, is on extending the support that we give to preventive health promotion activity by general practitioners and by primary care services generally. The hon. Gentleman's initial remark is, frankly, absurd against the background of a 43 per cent. real increase already on primary care services, a further planned 11 per cent. real increase and the further increases entailed in my statement.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Is my hon. Friend aware that his statement may have opened up a rift between myself and my daughter, who is a dental surgeon, unless I can tell her this evening when she telephones me that the increased charges for inspection will be spent on dental care in general?

Mr. Newton: I hope that I have made it clear in my statement and answers that we have a number of proposals to improve the standards of dental care and to make some changes in the dentists' contract. We shall certainly seek to promote the standards of primary care generally. I am not in a position to give an undertaking that the money raised in one quarter will be spent only in that quarter and, indeed, unless it were thought that the existing balance of primary care was perfect in all respects, it would be absurd for me to do so.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Does the Minister agree that, in the light of his emphasis on preventive and community medicine, it would be well worth considering even further the role of health visitors and considering increasing the ratio of health visitors to population from one to every 5,000 to one to every 3,000, so that health visitors can do their jobs much more effectively than they possibly can at present?

Mr. Newton: There has been a valuable increase in the number of health visitors. They are a singularly important part of the nursing profession and of the primary care services. Obviously, one of our objectives in encouraging health authorities to look at the proposals in the Cumberlege report and the circular which we have issued is to encourage the type of development which, in general terms, the hon. Lady wants.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I welcome the proposals to support doctors in rural areas. Will my hon. Friend say a word or two about dispensing by doctors in rural areas?

Mr. Newton: This is another delicate issue which is not greatly covered in the White Paper. We have no plans at present to change the balance of the arrangements for the rural dispensing committee and the new arrangements under the pharmacists' contract instituted last April which seek to arbitrate between the interests of dispensing doctors and those of pharmacists, not least in rural areas.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Is the Minister really saying that, in the face of all the Chancellor's income tax cuts and all the boasting about how borrowing has been reduced almost to nothing, the only way that he can finance these welcome changes to primary care and preventive medicine is by attacking the services that are the backbone of preventive medicine? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, despite all the high-faluting nonsense at the start of his statement, people in my constituency cannot get a simple flu vaccine, because supplies are not available, it seems, anywhere in the country, and they have to put down their names for the next year?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—yesterday gave a first-class answer on flu vaccine, so I simply refer the hon. Gentleman to *Hansard*.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): As a Member who served on the Select Committee which produced this report, may I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. It takes much more account of the Select Committee's views than the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said it does. If our general practitioner service, which is the finest in the world, requires more resources to carry out the important task that is set for it, and if the new charges on certain services will reduce the number of people coming forward for those services, will my hon. Friend increase resources for general practitioners and review the charges imposed on certain services?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he sought in the first part of his question

about extra resources for general practitioners. Indeed, that is one of the main aims of the proposals. However, I would be hesitant about giving him any assurance on the second part of his question because I simply do not accept the fears that have been expressed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): What is there in the White Paper to deal with that most primary of health care—the treatment of chronically sick babies? I have no doubt that the Minister and the House will join me in welcoming the news of about an hour ago that this afternoon Philip and Diane Barber will see the operation performed on David, their six-week-old son. The Barbers are constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). What is in the White Paper for the 34 other babies waiting for heart operations around the country? What is in the White Paper to answer the words of Dr. Eric Silove, the consultant paediatric cardiologist at Birmingham children's hospital, who revealed this morning that in the past four days a baby has died because of a lack of operating theatre staff? If the Minister can increase charges for specs and teeth, why can he not do anything about intensive care staff and get these operations moving?

Mr. Newton: As with yesterday afternoon, I shall not seek to respond to the hon. Gentleman in the spirit of his question. I shall simply say that I, too, am delighted that Baby Barber is having his operation this afternoon. I understand that the operation started at 2.30 pm. I very much hope that it is successful and that the baby's parents will have their anxiety relieved.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement and on the White Paper. Those of my constituents who are employed in the pharmaceutical industry will welcome the statement that the Government are to encourage

"the maintenance and development of a strong and efficient pharmaceutical industry in the UK"

and that

"the Government have no plans at present to extend the selected list scheme into other therapeutic areas or to introduce compulsory generic prescribing."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Yes, from the White Paper.

Does the Minister intend to stimulate still further investment into research and development and manufacture—particularly research into cures for diseases such as AIDS.

Mr. Newton: The basis of the relatively new pharmaceutical price regulation scheme and of the other steps taken is precisely to encourage a strong research-based pharmaceutical industry in this country. I welcome my hon. Friend's comments and I hope that he in turn will encourage those with whom he is in touch to co-operate with us on other ways of ensuring economic and effective prescribing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call those hon. Members who have been rising and who listened to the statement. However, I would ask for brief questions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have two questions of fact on sight testing. In answer to the informed and reasonable question of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), the Minister said that there was satisfaction in relation to consumer vouchers. What evidence does he have for that? Secondly, on paragraph 28 of the White Paper dealing with domiciliary sight testing, what extra monetary resources are likely to be available? Having received a cryogenic reception in the House on the sight testing proposals, should not the Minister go back to Alexander Fleming house and to his Cabinet colleagues and say, "The House of Commons is deeply unhappy about this. Think again."?

Mr. Newton: On resources, I have made it clear that we have to negotiate with the professions on many of these matters. Therefore, I cannot name specific sums that will go to any particular purpose. However, we shall want sufficient resources to be made available to provide an effective domiciliary sight testing scheme. On vouchers, when I have visited some of the new spectacle establishments that have grown up around the country, and talked to customers there, I have found them well satisfied with the arrangements.

Let me make it clear that we propose a number of improvements in the voucher scheme. Vouchers will be made available for contact lens purchase, which is not permitted at present. The position of the partially sighted will be given special consideration in relation to other voucher groups and the voucher scheme will also be extended to help adults whose spectacles are damaged owing to physical or mental disability. We are making a number of further improvements which I believe will be widely welcomed.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Is my hon. Friend aware that his announcement on proportional charges for dental treatment, for which the British Dental Association has been pressing, will be widely welcomed? Can he confirm to the House that the proportional charge that the Government have in mind will be lower because of the phasing-out of the free dental examination? That will encourage people to go to dental practitioners more regularly.

Mr. Newton: They will be lower than they would otherwise have been. I must make it clear that, because of the absurdities in the present system, the effect of proportional charges will vary greatly. Let me give an example. At the moment, for a precious metal bonded crown which costs £68, the patient pays £33, which represents just under half the cost. For a much less good job—a synthetic resin jacket—the patient also pays £33, which represents 94 per cent. of the cost. That is ridiculous and, above all, our proposal is more sensible.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Minister aware that his statement will do enormous damage to dental health and eye care? The evidence for that comes from the White Paper. Paragraph 2.13 says that the Government are to introduce charges for dental examination because of massive improvements in dental health in this country. Is the Minister so stupid that he does not understand that the reason why dental health has improved so massively is that we had free inspections? If we go back to the system of paying for examinations, we shall go back to bad dental health.

On the general practitioner service, the Minister should be aware that the massive difference between his Government and the Labour Government is that under Labour the services were always demand-led, and no other part of the Health Service had to pay for increased costs in the general practitioner service. The Minister's

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statement, on the other hand, makes it clear that other parts of the Health Service will pay for the increase in costs in the general practitioner service.

Mr. Newton: On the point about dental charges, the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. The principal reason for the great improvement in dental health is that the nation and parents have been taking much greater care of the dental health of children. Under the proposals, all dental treatment for children will be as free as it is now.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The provisions of the White Paper are welcome—especially the proposal to set targets so that general practitioner pay is more closely related to performance. Will my hon. Friend say more about the setting of targets, especially for doctors in the deprived inner-city areas?

Mr. Newton: Again, I face the difficulty that we shall need to negotiate with the profession. Therefore, I cannot give my hon. Friend the detailed information that he seeks. I assure him that among the matters to be negotiated will be arrangements to give greater encouragement to general practitioners to practise in inner-city areas and to give them better premises in which to practise. That is possibly the single most important need that we must consider when improving primary health care. The services are very poor in some of our inner cities.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is it the case, as is widely believed throughout the country, that junior Ministers in this benighted Government—particularly in the Department of Health and Social Security — are given special training in the presentation of policies and supportive arguments in which they themselves cannot possibly have any belief?

Mr. Newton: I hardly dare speculate about that. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman intended his remarks as a compliment. I believe that we should all be trained to face up to realities and to find resources to achieve good purposes.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend accept from me, as a diabetic, that his announcement about diabetes will be widely welcomed? Will he also accept from me, as somebody who uses the National Health dental service, that I am not in the least enamoured of his proposals? What proportion of the charge will be retained by the dentist, what proportion will be passed on to the kitty, and will the dentists themselves be remunerated additionally for becoming tax collectors?

Mr. Newton: Dentists will be no more tax collectors than they are now, because there are already very substantial charges. I need hardly say that the remuneration of dentists will need to be negotiated, as ever, with the profession.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Minister is trying to put on a brave face. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) said, the Minister is finding it difficult to justify a self-financing package when he should be arguing with the Chancellor of the Exchequer for more funds for the Health Service. Will he ensure that, unlike the occasion of the announcement on Scottish homes, his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland comes to the House and makes a statement on the implications for Scotland of the measures in the White Paper?

Mr. Newton: I note again what the hon. Gentleman said about Scotland, and no doubt my right hon. and learned Friend did so too. I see no need to apologise for a statement that provides an additional £600 million for primary care services by 1991, of which a relatively small part will be raised by the measures that I have proposed.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I do not suppose that the medical profession will be surprised at losing its perquisite of retiring and then immediately being re-contracted. Can the Minister tell me a little more about the compulsory retirement arrangements? Is he aware that some young GPs are very up to date, but some elderly GPs are very wise old birds indeed?

Mr. Newton: I entirely accept that it is not possible to state that at any particular age a particular group of people is totally past it. I emphasise that there is nothing to prevent any doctor from continuing in private practice if he so wishes. However, we think that, as an act of general policy, it is sensible no longer to enter into NHS contracts with people aged over 70. The precise nature of the change will again be the subject of discussions with the profession, and there will be a transitional period. I believe this to be one of the changes that will gain widespread support both in the profession—that has already become evident—and among many outside it.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Why has the Minister set the compulsory retirement age at 70 rather than lower? What is his estimate of the proportion of pensioners who will have to pay for dental and eye checks? Does he accept that, as the proposals to introduce these charges were not contained in the consultation paper or the general election Tory manifesto, they represent a cowardly attack on health prevention?

Mr. Newton: The changes that I have outlined this afternoon for dental examinations and eye tests require legislation, and that is contained in the Health and Medicines Bill that will be published later today. There will be no shortage of opportunity for debate and discussion and for those outside to make their views known.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does not my hon. Friend agree that the Opposition attacks on the principle of charging are rather hollow because it was their Government who, in 1951, first introduced the principle? Does he further agree that, for those who are not exempt and have good incomes, a £10 charge towards helping to keep their health is very good value? Is that not especially true when compared with, for example, the expenditure of £500 on a holiday? Is that not the sort of value standard that we should be considering?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend. Although £10 is the payment that we make now to ophthalmic opticians for sight tests, the payment to other sight testers, such as ophthalmic medical practitioners, is substantially less. As I have already said, I expect that under the new system there will be considerable pressure to keep charges down.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I draw the Minister's attention to the remarks of his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight),

who pointed out that it is not just a sight test, but an eye test, as the eyes are also screened for diseases? Will not charging act as a deterrent to the very basic primary care the Minister claims he is trying to improve? Is not that same principle applicable to dental charges? Will they not also be a deterrent, and, therefore, will not the standard of dental care decline, with the consequent effect of greater costs in the community through loss of work and working hours and so on? Is it not true the people will face those charges at a time when the Government are pouring some £11 billion into nuclear deterrence? People should know that mass extermination has a higher priority than the dental and eye care of our people.

Mr. Newton: Given that, at current rates, the charge for a dental examination will be about £3 or less, and in the light of what I have said about sight testing charges, I refuse to believe that, in a country whose standard of living is growing as fast as ours, the effects of the proposals will be as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the Minister and the House pause and comprehend that if, in the Health Service, we start to identify particular patients to receive treatment in advance of others, it will do grave damage to the NHS and its patients? I am, of course, referring to Baby Barber. Does my hon. Friend understand that if we were to alter our system of funding drugs, and not have huge companies that, in America, do not accept such disciplines, Britain would have the enormous advantage of ordinary drugs, the Health Service would benefit greatly and we would not have to make these appalling decisions of choice?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly true that the various actions that the Government have taken to ensure that the drug bill is effective and economical contribute, as did the introduction of the selected list, to other things that we want to do in the Health Service. It is all about priorities, and much of my statement was about priorities. I think that they are the right priorities.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Minister aware that dentists in inner-city areas are already gravely concerned about the deterioration in the state of the teeth of those living in inner cities? Has that not come about because of charges, which are clearly a disincentive? Yet, under the White Paper, charges will rise, and charging for what is currently free dental inspection will add to the deterrent effect.

The Minister mentioned accident and emergency provision. Is he aware that in the London borough of Newham that provision is now approaching breakdown point? I now understand why the Prime Minister does not want to televise the proceedings of the House — it is because the people of this country would see what an evil, rapacious and uncaring bunch the Tory Members have become.

Mr. Newton: I wish to make two points. First, if there is any sort of decline in the standard of teeth in inner-city areas, it is a result of the generally poor quality of primary health services in those areas — something that a large part of the thrust of the document is designed to tackle to bring about improvement. Secondly, one of the pressures on inner-city accident and emergency departments is, again, the inadequacy of the primary care services, not least the extent to which general practice is conducted from lock-up shops. That leads people to go to the local hospitals. Again, we come back to the essential need for the improvement of primary care services, and we are seeking to direct resources to that through this White Paper.

Mr. Robin Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it concerned with the statement?

Mr. Cook: Yes, it is.

Mr. Speaker: Well, the hon. Gentleman has the right to ask another question. He does not need to raise a point of order.

Mr. Cook: I am very happy to make my point under whichever procedure you recommend, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that the Minister is addressing a press conference on the White Paper and the Bill at 4.30 pm. The House is in some difficulty because the Bill is not available to hon. Members until it is presented, which may be another 15 or 20 minutes. It would be a courtesy to the House if the Minister did not refer to the contents of the Bill until it is in the hands of hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I entirely accept what the hon. Gentleman said. It may be difficult for me to respond to some of the questions that I may be asked, but I shall try to stick to the spirit of what the hon. Gentleman reasonably asked.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. The Front Bench has a right to a further Question. I will take points of order after the applications under Standing Order No. 20.

British Coal Houses (Nottinghamshire)

4.29 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"British Coal's decision in Nottinghamshire to reject the financial bid by a consortium of housing associations for the remaining tenanted homes in Nottinghamshire which British Coal currently owns."

About 2,000 homes and 3,500 people, mainly retired mining employees, are involved in this. The matter is urgent because, as I said during points of order in the House on Friday, the Secretary of State for Energy should have instructed British Coal to accept the consortium's bid of £7 million in the interests of the people who live in those houses. Late yesterday, British Coal decided to reject that offer. It is the third time that British Coal has turned down offers for those homes, with bids from the housing associations ranging from £5 million to the present offer of more than £7 million.

It is important that we discuss the matter, because more than 90 per cent. of those who live in the houses are over 65 years of age. They have given their lives to the coal industry and now face the prospect of private landlords, whose record in connection with former British Coal housing stock is deplorable. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that these tenants are seriously worried. Recent reports from the Nottinghamshire Federation of Coal Tenants and Shelter tell a sorry tale of bad landlords, intimidation and lack of repairs to properties. Those people have the right to security in old age in their homes.

An Adjournment of the House to discuss the matter fully would stop the mass sale of those homes to private speculators, who have shown their lack of care for the tenants involved.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of British Coal to turn down a bid of £7 million made by a consortium of housing associations to buy the remaining homes which it currently owns and rents in Nottinghamshire."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that the matter which he has raised is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Educational Buildings (Aberdeen)

4.31 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications of the recently discovered serious structural faults in educational establishments in Aberdeen."

There is a serious problem in my constituency. On Monday, Grampian regional council was forced to evacuate Aberdeen college of commerce. An engineer's report declared that serious structural faults in the building rendered it unsafe. There is no immediate danger of collapse, but I welcome the prudence of the regional council in erring on the side of safety. The regional council has been advised that the cost of repair will be such that the only economic course may be to demolish the building and rebuild it.

That is the third educational building in Aberdeen where serious faults have recently been discovered. Aberdeen technical college is undergoing repairs at an estimated cost of £500,000. Summerhill academy, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), requires repairs costing £750,000. I am advised that all three buildings were the work of one architect and that several other schools were built by him. Today, the director of education of Grampian regional council advised me that the council carries out annual inspections of all school buildings and that no serious defects have been found. However, to allay the fears of parents, pupils, staff and the public, immediate further inspections have been instructed. I welcome that response.

As a result of the emergency, the provision of education in my constituency and in the city of Aberdeen is in a crisis. First, there is the urgent task of relocating about 8,000 full-time, part-time and day release students from Aberdeen college of commerce. Secondly, we must urgently replace or repair the buildings that have already been identified as defective and others which may be so identified. We must also reassure parents, pupils, staff and public that there is no risk to anyone studying at educational establishments in Aberdeen.

In these days of severe financial restrictions placed on local authorities, the immense and unforeseen costs that now face Grampian regional council cannot be met from its present resources. In the event of your accepting the motion, Mr. Speaker, I shall call on the Secretary of State for Scotland to give a clear commitment to make available additional finance to the regional council.

I urge you to accept the motion, Mr. Speaker, and allow a discussion of this important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implications of the recently discovered structural faults in educational establishments in Aberdeen."

I regret that I must give the hon. Gentleman the same answer as I gave to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). This matter is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have other opportunities to raise it in the House.

Points of Order

4.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should be grateful if you would help the House by encouraging Ministers, when they give statements, to provide copies of those statements in the Vote Office, if not in advance at least by the time the statement starts. We will not see the Minister for Health's statement until *Hansard* is published tomorrow. It is especially unfair to the House because, when the Minister started his speech, people could be seen going round the Press Gallery delivering copies of it to the press. We all defer to the press as the fourth estate, of course, but there is no reason why we should be handicapped by not having copies of statements which would improve our ability to ask more probing questions and therefore make the Government more accountable. Perhaps the Government are frightened of that. That is why I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to use your influence in obtaining copies of statements.

Mr. Speaker: Although I have sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said, I do not think that this is a matter for the Chair. The question should properly be put to the Leader of the House tomorrow. I understand the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to spoil your birthday. You have already heard my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) talking about British Coal running all over those people in Nottinghamshire and other areas. I hope that you will use your influence to get the Secretary of State for Energy to help us with this problem, because we have reached the end of the road.

Mr. Speaker: I omitted to say to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) that I hoped that he would find other ways of bringing the matter before the House. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will do the same.

BILL PRESENTED

Health and Medicines

Mr. John Moore, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Tony Newton and Mrs. Edwina Currie presented a Bill to make a further provision in relation to the National Health Service, the testing of sight and instruction in matters relating to health and welfare and to amend the Medicines Act 1971: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 59.]

Scottish Parliament

4.37 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a Scottish Parliament, elected by a system of proportional representation, to assume legislative authority on all matters of public policy relating to Scotland under reservation of matters relating to defence, international and economic affairs which shall remain the preserve of the United Kingdom Parliament; to provide for changes in the constitution and functions of certain public bodies; and for connected purposes.

The Bill complements the motion that was introduced on Monday by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party. I have no wish to weary the House with such matters, but the demand for a measure to devolve political power to the constituent parts of the United Kingdom is more than a passing fancy and will not go away. Nor is the issue wholly Scottish. The motion seeks to reach a wider audience of hon. Members than did the predominantly, and understandably, Scottish debate on Monday.

It is essential for the long-term success of the policy of decentralisation that the Scottish measure is endorsed broadly by the whole House. In addition, the essential features of the decentralisation proposed for Scotland by the Bill should eventually be translated, suitably, to other nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

In essence, the Bill seeks a devolved legislative body to be called a Scottish Parliament. It would be granted tax-raising powers; it would deal with all domestic matters except defence, international affairs and United Kingdom economic policy. Reduced to those bare essentials, the Bill has considerable support across all parties, in the media and in the broad sweep of public opinion in Scotland, embodying as it does the proposition that such a proposal should be enshrined in law in the near future.

I do not think it is a matter of any great contention that a measure such as this is urgent and necessary because of, for example, the congestion of business in the House, the inexorable increase in pressure of time under which we all work, the defective quality of some of the legislation that is often produced on Scottish matters, the insidious infiltration of English notions into our civil and criminal law system and, perhaps most important of all, the lack of effective parliamentary scrutiny of the administrators in St. Andrew's house.

It is a matter of slightly more contention that reform is also necessary because of the party political balance, which currently leaves the governance of Scotland in the hands of a party that has only minority support in terms of Scottish votes and seats. There is no guarantee that that unsatisfactory position will change in the near future. There are therefore compelling and positive reasons for seeking a change by means of a carefully considered, democratic and thought-out measure of reform that is necessary and long overdue.

Nothing should distract us from the urgent need for reform, even if there is less agreement on the necessary component parts of that package. The proposals that we put forward—we have made no secret of it—contain a number of checks and balances that we consider essential. First, there is the need for a system of election that relates seats directly to votes. Secondly, we perceive the need to bring about a parallel and simultaneous reduction in the

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

tiered structure of Scottish local government. Thirdly, we face up squarely to the need to redress the balance of Scottish representation in this House en route to a United Kingdomwide system of devolution, with the consequences that that has for the role of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

We believe that parts of our proposals would meet the political needs of the present and command widespread support throughout the United Kingdom. Of course, we recognise that other political parties have different political components in their own schemes and that party political interests are obviously directly at stake. The ultimate test should be that the reform should command widespread public support in Scotland and beyond. All our party political interests should be subordinate and subservient to that aim.

The Secretary of State for Scotland—at least as of Monday night—appears to believe that the measure should be enacted, but only if there is evidence of widespread public support for it. Regrettably, the Government's test of public support appears to amount to people having to take to the streets to demonstrate their interest. That, indeed, is what the Government may eventually face if they continue their prolonged inaction.

I introduced a Bill in the last Parliament to establish a Scottish Parliament. I was voted down, having been opposed by Mr. Gerald Malone, the then hon. Member for Aberdeen, South—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman needs to be heard.

Mr. Kirkwood: Not for much longer, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall continue for as long as I have the privilege of serving in Parliament to raise the need for legislation of this sort — until the Government, or some future Government, see fit to give Scotland and the other constituent parts of the United Kingdom a meaningful measure of political decentralisation.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood) *rose*——

4.44 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) seeking to oppose?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on a neat piece of parliamentary footwork because, by his introduction of the Bill today, he has effectively forced the Labour party to defer consideration of its Bill, which was originally planned for next Monday, until after next week. That little bit of manoeuvring shows the disunity of the devolution ranks—a disunity that was underlined by the backbiting and bickering that we saw among Opposition Members in Monday's debate. It is underlined again and again by what happens in Scotland, too. For example, recently the so-called festival of democracy was held in Glasgow. It was supposed to be a fun-filled day of united devolutionary fervour, but what happened? First, the Scottish National party pulled out; then the Social Democratic party pulled out; it was followed by the other part of the Social Democratic party; and, finally, the Liberals pulled out, too. That is an example of the fact that there is no unity whatever when one gets behind the slogans.

Monday's debate, and the hon. Gentleman's speech today, are remarkable for the absence of any real effort to point to tangible advantages for the people of Scotland of having a Scottish assembly. We know, however, what the costs and damage would be. The leaders of industry and commerce have made it absolutely clear that they do not believe that an assembly would be in the interests of the wealth-creating sector. The costs would not only consist of setting up an assembly, although the Scotland and Wales Bill of the last Labour Government estimated that 1,000 extra Scottish civil servants would be created by that measure alone. There would also be the costs of uncertainty, the wholesale and unnecessary reorganisation of local government and the costs of extra taxation. Let the House be in no doubt about the ambition of the Left in Scotland to use an assembly to increase taxation on the minority, or taxes on industry and commerce, to finance extravagance — just as it has done under the rating system in Scotland. There would also be constant conflict between an assembly and the House.

It is breathtaking for the Liberal party to say that it recognises that its proposals involve a major constitutional problem, best known as the West Lothian question. The Leader of the Liberal party has told the House that there is no answer to the West Lothian question, but that he will go ahead with his proposals in any event. That question is an example of the conflict that would inevitably arise and which cannot be avoided.

Take, for example, 1964, or 1974, when Labour Governments had a majority in the United Kingdom but not in England. It would not be tolerable for Scottish Members to vote on measures that the majority of English Members did not want, when neither Scottish nor English Members had any right to vote on similar measures that affected Scotland. The result would be constitutional chaos.

I believe that there are genuine doubts among English Labour Members of Parliament about Scottish devolution. Many of them may recall the wise words of the present leader of the Labour party, who said in 1978:

"The irony of devolution is that it will smash beyond healing the unity of Britain . . . These devolution proposals offer a maximum of risk with a minimum of gain to the Scots people."

I urge English Labour Members to take this opportunity to abstain on the vote, to show their doubts about devolution. I urge my hon. Friends to oppose a measure that would result in no gains for the people of Scotland and would involve real costs and disadvantages for them. It would inevitably lead to a constitutional crisis for the United Kingdom and the House.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19, (Motions for leave to bring in bills and nomination of select committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes: 97, Noes: 263.

Division No. 80] **[4.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Alton, David	Buchan, Norman
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Caborn, Richard
Armstrong, Ms Hilary	Callaghan, Jim
Ashdown, Paddy	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Ashton, Joe	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Barron, Kevin	Cartwright, John
Beith, A. J.	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Blair, Tony	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Clelland, David

Corbett, Robin
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pike, Peter
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Worthington, Anthony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn and
Mr. Bill Walker.

Question accordingly negatived.

5.2 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The House has just been invited to make a very important decision on a very important constitutional matter. It was apparent to hon. Members who have just voted in the Division that official Opposition Members moved in all directions. Some went to the Aye Lobby and some went to the No Lobby. Can we have some guidance as to their stance?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is not a point of order for the Chair. Hon. Members are entitled to go into whichever Division Lobby they choose.

Orders of the Day

Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill

Not amended in the Standing Committee, considered.

Clause 1

ALTERATION OF FINANCIAL LIMITS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

5.3 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 1, line 14, after 'corporations', insert

"(whether or not existing at the commencement of the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Act 1987)".

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 7, in page 1, line 19, at end insert

"(whether or not existing at the commencement of the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Act 1987)".

Mr. Boyes: We gave the Bill an unopposed Second Reading, but expressed a number of reservations in principle about undemocratic, unelected bodies having strong powers, and I described those as planning, land assembly, disposal for private sector development, industrial and commercial development, promotion, environment improvement, housing and infrastructure. By any definition, urban development corporations will have tremendous powers.

We also stressed on Second Reading that the urban development corporations can work outside the strategic and economic goals of the local authority. Urban development corporations can actually implement policies contrary to the wishes and policies of the local authority. To that extent we regret very much that the Government could not support our amendment in Committee calling for consultation with the appropriate local authority, or authorities, before investment decisions were made.

It is interesting to note that the CBI, at its conference recently, also stressed the dangers of ignoring local authorities. Mr. Peter Hetherington, in an article in *The Guardian*, wrote:

"The CBI yesterday warned the Government that its efforts to revive inner cities will fail if it bypassed councils with Whitehall-controlled agencies.

The CBI director-general, Mr. John Banham, said the councils were efficient and effective in many respects."

In the same article, Mr. David Goldstone, the managing director of Regalian properties, said:

"government constraints on funds for local councils were often short-sighted."

Despite our concerns, on Second Reading I said that we would work with the urban development corporations until the next general election, when we would review all development corporation activities.

The basis of the amendment is our concern about mini urban development corporations. There are strong rumours that an announcement will be made shortly that a large number of mini corporations are to be created. I understand that the figure is in excess of 24. I have a series of questions for the Minister. How many mini corporations does he expect to announce in the short term?

Are there any long-term objectives and goals? As rumours are flying at the moment about the creation of new mini urban development corporations, when will he announce a date for them?

As this matter is doubtless advanced, what consultation has taken place, or will take place, with the local authority or authorities concerned with these urban development corporations? This morning I spoke to the policy head of the directorate of Manchester city council. It is clear that a number of local authorities are already working closely with the private sector and developing urban regeneration initiatives in genuine joint venture partnerships. Might not the imposition of the solution of mini urban development corporations be unnecessary and even counter-productive in many of those areas? Will the Minister assure us that he will not impose the solution in areas where there is clear evidence of co-operation without consultation with local interests to see whether they believe that the introduction of such measures is necessary?

What will happen if a local authority refuses to agree to have a mini urban development corporation in its area? I am also concerned about the way in which the mini urban development corporations will be placed in localities. I raise this point because, in a speech on Wednesday 3 June 1987 to the Loynell's Road Residents Association in Birmingham Northfield, the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"We hope local people will bring to our attention areas of dereliction which they think can benefit from this approach."

He meant the mini UDC approach. When the Minister replies, will he define exactly what he means by "local people"? I see no mention of local authorities in the extract of the speech by the Secretary of State.

Will the Minister tell us whether each mini urban development corporation will have its own board? That will be of particular interest if there should be more than one mini urban development corporation in one local authority area. Will he also amplify the point he made in reply to my question on 4 November 1987 when I asked if he would consider funding urban development corporations by the same method as the new town corporations are funded?

The Minister said:

"The answer to the question why we cannot fund them as we did the new towns is straightforward: the new towns were financed from loans and were building on green field sites. The UDCs are building in areas where many millions of pounds must be spent before sites can be developed, and the only prudent way of financing such expenditure is by grant."—[*Official Report* 4 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 1013.]

The difference is that central Government have absolute control over the grants, whereas, if the urban development corporations were free to raise loans on the market, for example, that would give them less control over the spending powers of the mini urban development corporations and the urban development corporations than the Minister intended. I could not follow the difference between the green fields suggestion and the other phrase that was used about the inner cities.

I understand that the aim is to attract private capital, with an initial investment of between £10 million and £15 million of public money. We made it absolutely clear on Second Reading that certain areas—for example, the north-east of England—have tremendous difficulties in raising private capital. At that time I quoted at length from a letter from Martin Laing, the chairman of John Lanig plc and chairman of the national contractors' group of the Building Employers Confederation. I shall not quote from it now. That pointed out clearly the difficulties that areas such as mine would have in attracting private capital.

In an editorial in *The Times*, of 13 November 1986, the writer stated:

"the £128 million of grants to the Merseyside Board have yet to stimulate anything like the response from private developers seen in London's Docklands.

The new boards will have to operate conditions much closer to Merseyside than to those of the London Docklands."

Part of our opposition to the formation of mini UDCs is that we cannot see that £10 million to £15 million will attract the private capital that the government anticipate. We consider them to be a method of bypassing the local authorities. John Banham warned us of the dangers of putting money into areas without local authorities being given the opportunity to cary out their tasks and functions.

It has been put to me that it would be eminently sensible and wise to monitor the results obtained by the existing five urban development corporations before we get a proliferation of urban development corporations, even if some of them are minis. Could it not create an atmosphere in which in some areas urban development corporations will compete among themselves for scarce resources, particularly in areas where local authorities and other agencies already find it extremely difficult to attract private capital?

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boyes: No; I have almost finished.

We note, as part of our opposition to mini urban development corporations, Lord Young's comments in this morning's edition of *The Independent*. He said:

"Where we see our role is to help employment come back to the inner cities. Now there is no way in which any new outside employer would go into the inner cities. Vandalism is too high and the problems are too great".

It seems that the Conservative party has already abandoned its plans for inner-city regeneration. Lord Young clearly accepts that there will be difficulties in attracting capital into our inner-city areas. If Lord Young is correct, does that not emphasise my point that the idea of a proliferation of mini UDCs should be abandoned? Opposition Members believe that they should be scrapped, or at worst delayed, because of that pessimistic approach.

Those of us interested in inner-city regeneration seek an optimistic approach. The Government's proposals today reveal a cynical approach. I hope that the Minister will make it absolutely clear that, until the five urban development corporations have existed for a reasonable time, and we have been able to measure their success, he will withhold any statement about the introduction of the 30 mini urban development corporations.

5.15 pm

Mr. Steen: If I had been allowed to intervene, I should have asked the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) a number of questions based on the fact that he does not want urban development corporations. Is he saying that the same sums of money should go to local authorities? Is he saying that that is the solution to the inner-city problems? If one traces the history of the inner cities, one can see what has happened on the Opposition Benches.

In 1968, the then Prime Minister woke up to the problems of the inner cities. The Government gave £20

[Mr. Steen]

million to solve the problems. The Labour Government then shifted the rate support grant from the rural areas to the inner-city areas, believing that a little extra money would sort out the difficulties. It did not. The following Conservative Administration then put a lot of money into research, there were inner-city studies, and studies of the neighbourhood quality of life. They believed that more research was needed.

Then the Labour Government introduced a whole range of measures for rejigging local authority priorities. The most noticeable measure was the comprehensive community programme, which told local authorities to re-order their priorities in favour of the inner cities. Since 1979, the Conservative Administration have introduced an entirely new approach to the inner cities, based not on community development or social development, but on economic redevelopment. The watershed clearly occurred in 1979, when the research and other measures about social cohesion and community development were replaced by economic regeneration. We must give this Government the credit for that, and it should be stated that the single-minded approach on economic regeneration has had very important results.

Not all Government measures have been as successful as one would have liked. The enterprise zone presents a mixed picture and the free ports have not got off the ground as fast as one would have liked. The urban development corporations in Merseyside and the London docklands, which are the oldest, have no doubt had an impact.

If we pump enormous sums of money into a very small locality, it is obvious that there will be some impact. The question is whether the impact is desirable, whether it is beneficial to the area, and whether there is a better way of spending those sums of public money.

I am anxious to hear the Minister's reply to the amendment, because President Carter spent billions of dollars on a similar exercise to the urban development corporations. He called it the model city programme, and targeted substantial sums of public money into rundown industrial areas, mostly in the North American cities, with one or two in the south. He spent every conceivable amount of public money trying to revive dying neighbourhoods. That is exactly what the urban development corporations are trying to do.

There is a slight distinction between them and the model city programme of President Carter, which erased the entire housing stock of an area, moved the people out, and then rebuilt the housing, redesigned the environment and put people back again. To the amazement of Congress, 10 years after the experiment it found unfortunately the same incidence of unemployment, drug addiction and drunkenness, the same problems with single-parent mums, the elderly and the retired, and the same number of young people on probation. So all that resulted was newer housing, but it soon became run down again as the same people moved back and could not maintain it.

The urban development corporations are pouring larger sums of public money into inner cities than has ever been poured into them before. The Opposition should be ecstatic that the Government have poured so much money into inner cities. That should be the Opposition's starting point, because no Government since 1968 have put so much money into inner-city areas. The question that the Opposition should ask—they have not asked it, so I am asking it for them—is, could not that money be better or as well spent if it did not necessarily go through the local authorities? Local authorities have problems with competing claims, and they do not have the mechanism to do the things that urban development corporations could do.

The solution to inner-city problems has not been found by this Government or previous Governments because the money, which amounts to tens or hundreds of millions of pounds, is being spent solely on economic regeneration. Although economic regeneration is crucial to the redevelopment of inner cities, the only way inner cities will ever redevelop is by motivating and financing the people who live in the houses, street by street, to help themselves. In years to come, we will look back on urban development corporations as another watershed. They are another approach by which the Government try to rescue the inner cities.

The Opposition's argument, which they have put as strongly as they can, is that the weakness of urban development corporations as a concept is that they are undemocratic and do not go through local authorities. My argument is not along those lines. I think that local authorities have failed, for good reasons, to regenerate areas in ways the urban development corporations have done in dockland and on Merseyside.

My criticism is that the money could be better targeted if the urban development corporations were based on neighbourhoods and on people rather than on buildings. London is a special case and docklands has been a great success; no one would want to criticise the Government for putting money into London. On Merseyside they made a brave attempt, but I do not know how successful it has been. It was based on derelict docks; there were no people living there. I am concerned that the new development corporations or the mini development corporations may not be based on communities and neighbourhoods. The inner cities are bound to get worse unless the Government direct the public intervention, which is now on a larger scale than ever before, into neighbourhoods which exist; they should bolster the people living there and help them to help themselves.

Planning controls should be relaxed so that people can work even in their back garden or in their back shed which planning regulations prevent them doing now. There should be much more homesteading and shopsteading so that people can take over derelict buildings and renovate, improve and live in them. That was done in London under the Conservative GLC. It has been done all over the States, but it is not being done in our inner cities today. Homesteading and shopsteading would start to change the face of these areas.

Cheap money is critical so that people can borrow without the penalties suffered now because of the levels of interest. If public money is pumped into urban development corporations, something will happen. Places will look better, but if the model city programmes of the States have anything to teach us it is that just giving a facelift to decaying urban areas will not change the endemic problems of the people living there. We keep talking about being taught by what other people have done, but we seem never to learn; we go on making the same mistakes.

I think that the amendment is aiming to tease out the extent to which the Government will spend increasing sums of public money on inner cities through urban development corporations or mini urban development corporations but sidestepping local government. We may disagree about whether or not there is advantage in that. Although that expenditure may make areas look better, the endemic problems will still exist.

I fear that the urban development corporation is just another of the long list of initiatives, welcome though they are. The House must be delighted that the Government are concentrating on inner-city problems, but it would be wrong of me to welcome unreservedly more urban development corporations because I believe that public money could be better targeted. It should be targeted on people rather than on buildings and it should be invested in getting the people in problem areas to help themselves. In the 1970s, the Labour Government injected social and community workers into inner-city areas; I know, because I was one of them. As a result of so many social workers going into some inner cities, rents of unfurnished and furnished dwellings went up because the social workers wanted accommodation in the areas which they were supposed to help.

We want to support the Minister. He is brave and enthusiastic and he wants urban development corporations to succeed. Hundreds of millions of pounds are going into urban development corporations. It is too easy, in an empty Chamber on a Wednesday afternoon, to say, "It is fine, let us go ahead." That is the way the House operates. We pour enormous sums of public money into ailing urban areas, believing that that will solve the problems. Throwing money at any problem does not solve it unless the expenditure is targeted correctly. I think the House may have got the message. While I welcome the Government's interest in inner cities and while I welcome urban development corporations, certainly in docklands and possibly the brave attempt on Merseyside, I wonder if it is the salvation of inner-city problems to have more of them.

In five years' time, if I am still here, I will probably be making another speech when the Government come up with another scheme. We should be much more reflective before we pour in all this money. I am not at all convinced that it is the solution. It proves to the country that the Government care, but we could do better if the expenditure was targeted in a slightly different way. The Minister should tell us that he will consider my idea of changing slightly the boundaries of urban development corporations to include neighbourhoods so that the power behind urban development corporations is not civil servants and task forces sent from London setting up new local offices, but the people living in the area who are inspired to help themselves. That must be the message of the Government. I am sure in his reply the Minister will want to say something helpful.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has ever been to Teesside. If he had been there recently, he would have seen the enormous strides which have already been made by Teesside development corporation. It has been in existence for only 10 weeks, but during that time it has announced three major projects, one covering Hartlepool marina involving an injection of £50 million, one covering the Stockton race track development involving £8 million, and one covering the Smiths dock offshore projects, for which I have not got a figure.

Matching that, and very important, is the fact that already £100 million of private money has been put into the urban development corporation, as I was informed this morning when I spoke to the chief executive. This is the type of new thinking and initiative that will come from the urban development corporations. We should not try to make them stillborn, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams seems to want to do. When the Prime Minister visited Teesside, she said that it was an area of initiative, talent and ability and those words have been taken as a slogan by the Teesside development corporation.

5.30 pm

Many enthusiastic people will help in this matter. In Stockton, for example, there will be a leisure development which will be the best of its kind in the country. That will attract people to the north-east. Far too often, Governments have given money to the region, just as the Government did earlier this year when they gave a regional grant of £330,000 to ICI. That money probably bought machinery from overseas and showed up as a book-keeping entry from one area to another carried out in London. None of that regional development money would have been spent in Teesside or have improved the region's economy. On the other hand, the UDC is spending the money in the region and priority will be given to local firms. Local firms have already benefited within the first 10 weeks of the UDC being set up.

On Second Reading, I made some fairly strong remarks about the calibre of Labour councillors in the north-east of England. I do not withdraw from that as a generalised statement, but I identified an individual and that was wrong. I regret that an individual was so identified. I shall keep to the thrust of my comments, but I would like to retract my comments about any individuals.

Mr. Boyes: Although I welcome the latter comments of the hon. Gentleman, will he retract what he said about local authority officers who cannot defend themselves? Local councillors and Members of Parliament can defend themselves through a plethora of means, but civil servants and local government officers, who are often criticised, have no means of defending themselves.

Mr. Holt: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I hope that he will accept that, as there are so many councillors who work for one authority but are councillors for another, I cannot withdraw my comments in that respect. However, I retract my generalised remark about officers per se.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I recognise that this is as near as the hon. Gentleman will come to an apology, and I welcome it. Would it be a good idea for him to apologise for his remarks in the press — to save him having to do so the next time we debate the Bill — alleging corruption in direct labour organisations in the district of Langbaurgh, when there is no substantial evidence to support those remarks?

Mr. Holt: If the hon. Lady were to make that remark outside the House, I would sue her. She knows that I made no remarks about corruption and, if she uses such words outside the House, she will take the consequences.

Miss Mowlam: If that is not the case, would the hon. Gentleman like to withdraw what was printed in the local press saying that he made those statements? Is this not an ideal chance for him to contradict those statements?

Mr. Holt: This will not help the debate. I should be ruled out of order if I went outside the scope of the amendment.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I would like to point out the magnanimity of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). It is nice to see this gentlemanly act and the withdrawal of his remarks about an individual during our last debate on this matter. That was right, but both I and my hon. Friend stress the need for co-operation between UDCs and local authorities. That has been the hallmark of the success of the Teesside development corporation and I speak for both of us when I say that I would like to see that continued.

Mr. Holt: I would like to see it continuing, but I am not sure that it will. Let me explain to my hon. Friend some of the problems that he is likely to have with the UDC. The chairman of the highways committee of Cleveland county council has said that he will not change his priorities to meet the requirements of the UDC. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) said that there must be co-operation between Cleveland county council and the UDC. It is no good their saying that they will not help the UDC with the roads and services needed to develop the area, as the chairman of the highways committee said recently. That will not help progress. It is important for the two sides to work together. I hope that, in the same spirit of magnanimity, the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington will speak to senior Labour Members in Cleveland and prevail upon them to work with the new Teesside development corporation so that new jobs can be produced.

Miss Mowlam: I would like to echo the comments of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) and say how keen we are to work with the new UDC. Money is available for Teesside and, as the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said, we are keen to co-operate, whatever our doubts may be. If the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) is seeking co-operation with the county and the districts, he is more likely to achieve it if he starts working through the normal channels of communication with local authority officers and elected members, rather than making outrageous statements in the press and in the House.

Mr. Holt: I do not think that my statements are any more outrageous than those of the chairman of the Cleveland highways committee. If the hon. Lady wants to talk to someone, she should talk to him, not me. Co-operation must come from the committee which made the statement.

UDCs were established by the Government primarily to regenerate the inner cities and to create jobs. Teesside development corporation expects the creation of 3,000 jobs in the first three years. That is to be welcomed by everybody. It is cheap per job in comparison with what has been spent in regional aid that has gone to the head offices of companies in London, not to the area. Within the next fortnight, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will open the marina project at Hartlepool and, thereafter, other proposed schemes will go ahead.

I hope that the Minister will answer a question which he did not answer on Second Reading and tell us whether the Government are prepared to re-examine the boundaries of the Teesside development corporation. The boundaries in Langbaurgh have been drawn arbitrarily. They should be flexible and should not be drawn for all time. None of my constituency is included in the TDC area, but many of my constituents work in that area. These lines on the map should not be absolute.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This amendment deals with money, not boundaries. On Third Reading, the hon. Gentleman is at liberty to discuss boundaries, but not during debate on this group of amendments.

Mr. Holt: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that there will be sufficient money in the kitty to enable the review of boundaries to be undertaken on a permanent basis. If that comes about, my constituents will be grateful for that amount of money having been thoughtfully set aside by the Minister when he reconsidered the matter.

On Second Reading, I said that the amount of money that had been made available will make the people happy. I do not know whether happiness can be bought with money, but something along the lines of the Teesside development corporation is necessary. What is encouraging is that, as a result of the sort of regeneration that the Government are bringing, we already have private investment outside the UDC area, which has brought 2,000 jobs and £25 million of investment. That was the result of an announcement on 23 October by a private company.

There can be no doubt that the north-east of England has received and is receiving a great deal of attention from the Government and from the Minister—I know that he has taken a particular interest in the area. We welcome the initiative and we welcome the money. We look forward to that money being spent so that 3,000 jobs are created in two years at the absolute maximum.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): When the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) opened this debate he mentioned the difficulties that will be experienced by the UDCs in raising private capital in the north-east of England. He referred specifically to a leading article on 26 October, which said that the £120 million available to Merseyside had not attracted anything near the sum of private money that had been attracted to London.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has told the House that £100 million has already been attracted for the Teesside development corporation from the private sector. That sum is a measure of the TDC's success. It may be that, because TDC is the largest development corporation—it is larger than several other development corporations put together, including London—it is therefore attracting a great deal of interest. It is also attracting interest because it has a deep-water port facing east on the east coast.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington also mentioned that he was looking for greater co-operation between the local authorities and the development corporations. On Second Reading and in Committee we discussed, at great length, the need for such co-operation. The urgency with which we must address this matter tonight is due to the fact that the imagination that has been

injected by the TDC into the local economy has been sadly lacking in the local authorities in Cleveland, Stockton and elsewhere in the region. In years gone by, it has been all too evident that those local authorities have made political decisions more often than they have made marketing decisions. Indeed, the Labour party is used to regarding the north-east as safe territory where it can do exactly as it likes. It has done its best to extinguish the torch of enterprise in that region by driving out the private householder and, wherever possible, the private business man.

The local Labour-controlled authorities are only now waking up to the fact that their policies have driven jobs away from the region, but the Conservatives have always been concerned to ensure that business and private enterprise thrives in the north as much as it does in the south.

Miss Mowlam *rose*——

Mr. Devlin: I shall give way in a moment. That is why we are pumping extra resources into the UDCs and, in particular, into Teesside. I hope that the available money and the extra allocation announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement will not be given in equal parts to the UDCs, but will take account of special needs and exciting projects. On that basis, Teesside will inevitably take the lion's share.

Opposition Members are chiefly concerned not that we are bypassing local authorities, but that we are throwing the policies of the Labour party in the north-east into reverse. I believe that that is the main reason behind the amendments that they have tabled to the Bill.

Miss Mowlam: I agree with the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) about the jobs that have arrived on Teesside as a result of the money invested. Both sides of the House welcome such job creation. However, will he justify his statement that local Labour authorities have turned jobs away from the area? What industries and jobs have been specifically turned away?

Mr. Devlin: Certainly it has been the case that Teesside local authorities — Stockton borough council, Middlesbrough borough council and Cleveland county council—are high-rating authorities. On more than one occasion—I will happily name names if the hon. Lady wishes—businesses have moved to north Yorkshire and other parts of the country to escape Cleveland's high rates.

Miss Mowlam: Name them.

Mr. Devlin: We could start with Marlborough Technical Management, but——

5.45 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not believe that there is any reason to name names. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) is leading the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) up the garden path.

Mr. Devlin: Perhaps that is an exciting prospect— [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Quite.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why, historically, firms did not go to the north-east was the trade union grip on firms in the area?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now very wide of the amendment. I have tried to bring the hon. Member for Stockton, South back to the amendment and I appeal to him to deal with it.

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said that there are many things lacking in the UDCs and he feels that, in some ways, it would be better to scrap the entire Bill rather than to amend it in the ways sought by the Opposition.

I suggest that what is lacking in the north-east is confidence. The TDC and the Tyneside development corporation will reinvoke the self-confidence that drove our region forward in the past century. I tried to invoke some of that spirit in my maiden speech to the House on Second Reading of the Bill.

I have a sneaking suspicion—I believe it is shared by many northerners — that perhaps there is something wrong with the region and that is why we have such high unemployment. However, it is the TDC's task to show that there is nothing wrong with our region, that we have everything going for us, and to pick up all the elements of enterprise that are succeeding throughout Teesside and show them off. It is the TDC's task to show the region that the self-confidence that previously drove the region forward is still there and is flourishing. It is also necessary for the TDC to re-establish that spirit of self-confidence, either where it is no longer present or where it has been driven out by the policies of Labour-controlled local authorities.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you know I am not one who rises often on points of order. I must feel quite strongly before I do so.

The amendment that has been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and myself is fairly narrow. With respect to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who is a new Member, he has ample opportunity in his maiden speech to make what he considered to be the important points. I believe that he is turning this debate into one about the nature of local authorities and UDCs and not about UDC funding——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the point. It is difficult and I have tried to bring the hon. Member for Stockton, South back to the amendment. He is a new Member and the Chair must be more tolerant of new Members. However, I appeal to hon. Members to speak to the amendment on the Order Paper and not to go wide of that amendment. It is fine to speak more widely on Third Reading, but not when dealing with amendments. I appeal to all hon. Members who wish to take part in this debate to speak to the amendments, because I have been as tolerant as I possibly could be.

Mr. Devlin: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your tolerance and forbearance. I apologise if I have erred from the path of righteousness during the debate. I shall now keep rigidly to the amendment.

I think that the most important point about the funding of development corporations is that it should not be distributed on an equal basis between all the corporations. In my disclosure of the many hidden talents of the north-east, I was attempting to show that Teesside has many things going for it—many strengths on which an urban development corporation can build very strongly. I look

[Mr. Devlin]

forward to Teesside gaining a much greater share of the available resources when the Government come to consider the corporations on merit.

Given its beautiful countryside, skilled work force and good communications, I believe that Teesside will take off in a way that other development corporations may not. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will examine what extra resources can be given to the exciting projects that have been outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh.

Mr. Steen: May I beg the indulgence of the House to make one or two points clear? First, comments have been made about my wishing to scrap the Bill. The amendment is about substituting the words "whether or not existing" after the word "all". The important point that I should like to make——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has already spoken. Is it not the case that he cannot speak again without leave of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. He is quite right. The hon. Member for South Hams has spoken, and can do so again only by leave of the House.

Mr. Steen: I am always grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for helping the House in its directions. May I seek the leave of the House to make one or two comments which have come out of——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. By leave of the House, the hon. Gentleman can do that. However, there has been an objection. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) objected to the hon. Gentleman speaking again.

Mr. Steen: Is one objection enough?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, one voice is enough.

Miss Mowlam: May I quickly ask the Minister two questions directly related to finance? First, can he tell us whether any financial implications have emerged from his meeting in Brussels in relation to efforts to get local people working on schemes produced by the Teesside development corporation? Is there any initiative to link the money invested with local jobs?

Secondly, I am concerned that money made available through the Teesside development corporation may be negated by the money that could potentially disappear from the area because of the unified business rate to be brought in with the poll tax. If the money is to be centrally redistributed per head of population—I ask the Minister to clarify that, because I am not sure about it—in some inner urban areas, where there is a low level of population, that could result in less money coming back from the unified business rate, which would negate the money going in via the urban development corporation.

Will that not undermine the stated aim of the Government, which is to invest more money in inner areas?

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Three Conservative Members spoke before the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) rose. Is it not normal for hon. Members who wish to speak, and who are present in the Chamber, to rise continually and try to catch your eye, so that we have a balanced debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is possible that hon. Members who are not inspired to speak in the earlier part of the debate may later feel inclined to involve themselves for one reason or another. The hon. Lady is perfectly in order.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I welcome the largely positive approach adopted by Opposition Members, particularly those from the official Opposition, not only during the moving of amendments but on Second Reading — which was unopposed — and in Committee. I also welcome the description of me as brave by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). It is the first time that I have been called that for a very long time. The last time was in 1972, when I was fighting a by-election against the present hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith). He not merely beat me; he metaphorically sat on me. That was a very painful experience, and the local paper described me as brave for taking him on. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Rochdale is not present to hear that, because he would have enjoyed it.

I am anxious to try to answer as many of the questions raised in the debate as possible. Let me start by reiterating what I said about mini UDCs in Committee. I referred then to the Conservative party manifesto commitment, and I do not feel any need to rehearse that again. I spelt out clearly what criteria we would be looking for when declaring areas mini UDCs. However, I should perhaps draw the attention of the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) to the figure that he quoted in his opening remarks on the amendment. He referred to a figure of about two dozen. I can categorically deny that: the hon. Gentleman is very wide of the mark. I do not know whether that helps him. What I cannot help him with is an announcement about mini UDCs, but, as I tried to make clear in Committee, we hope to make an announcement by the end of the year.

The hon. Gentleman asked what consultations had taken place with local authorities. I also tried to deal with that in Committee. It would be extremely difficult for us to enter into consultations with local authorities in an area where we intend to put a UDC. To some extent, expectations would be built up; and the extra money that would be available for the area would have a considerable bearing on developments. It could be extremely reckless for us to act in that way. There must and will be a period of consultation before a UDC is created, which may be of some comfort to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman asked what would happen if local authorities refused to have UDCs. He can probably guess the answer. If the proposal is passed by a statute in the House, the law of the land will override all other considerations. He also asked what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meant when he referred in a recent speech to local people. The local people in question could have relevant knowledge of the development potential of a particular area. They might be local residents, business men or local authorities. Of course, the decision whether to designate a UDC is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, subject to Parliament's approval. Not

all areas identified or brought to my attention, formally or informally, will be appropriate for UDC purposes. As for the question whether each UDC will have its own board, the answer is yes.

The hon. Gentleman asked why we cannot monitor existing UDCs more effectively before declaring more, although they may be smaller than their cousins. Again, there is a straightforward answer. Having made a commitment in the manifesto, which was the major plank on which we were elected, we are determined to speed up the regeneration of many such areas. If there is any difference between the Opposition and ourselves on what constitutes an area that is worthy of regeneration, that will apply not only to inner cities but to inner urban areas. We have had some experience with two UDCs which have been in operation for some time.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister has referred to UDCs already in operation. I think that he would agree that the London Docklands development corporation is a maxi corporation. Can the Minister define "mini"? According to my recollection, section 135 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 defines the possibility of a corporation without grading corporations in any way. Will the Minister tell us what he has in mind? Has he announced the number of UDCs that he expects the Government to establish?

Mr. Trippier: I understand why the hon. Gentleman asks that question. However, although I do not wish to make a heavy point of it, he was not present earlier when his hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington was asking me questions. My definition of a mini urban development corporation is "small." It is small in area. Furthermore, it would receive a smaller sum of money than its cousin, the maxi urban development corporation. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has given another reason why the Government cannot effectively monitor mini urban development corporations. There are no mini urban development corporations at the moment. We shall have to build on the obvious success of the maxi urban development corporations.

6 pm

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington asked whether a local authority could apply. Yes, it could. Those to whom the Secretary of State referred in his recent speech could include local authorities. The hon. Gentleman referred also to a recent interview with my right hon. Friend Lord Young. There is no difference of opinion between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment. Inward investment in Washington has been extremely successful. For example, Nissan is now located there, but the point that I have made on several occasions is that one cannot regularly expect to achieve that degree of success.

Wherever possible, we must encourage indigenous growth. Therefore, I welcome what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt): that the urban development corporation in his area is of great benefit to local firms. It is important to encourage start-ups, but it is also very important to encourage the development and the strengthening of existing firms—a point that will not be lost on the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington.

I welcomed the bullish statement of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) concerning his constituency and the north-east region as a whole. He made a similar statement in his maiden speech. I very much welcomed it then, and I am sure that the House enjoyed it.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam) said that in future I ought not to fly over Redcar; I ought to drop in. I do not know whether the hon. Lady meant that literally. If the hon. Lady would be kind enough to extend an invitation to me to visit Redcar, I should be only too pleased to do so.

I shall reply in reverse order to the hon. Lady's two questions. I shall check what I am about to say when I return to the Department, but I believe that the proposed unified business rate will benefit the north-east, including the area that she represents. I shall happily write to the hon. Lady explaining in what way the area would benefit and what the percentage decrease would be. In general terms, it will benefit areas in the north as opposed to those in the south.

Mr. Devlin: I think that my hon. Friend the Minister is looking for a reduction of about 23 per cent.

Mr. Trippier: If that is a fact rather than hypothesis, I am sure that the hon. Lady will be impressed.

Miss Mowlam: The figure that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) has given is the average figure. I agree wholeheartedly that the average figure is 23 per cent. If, however, it were to be redistributed on a per head of population basis, the figure would be different. I am interested in what would happen if we went below the average level. It is that figure in which I am particularly interested.

Mr. Trippier: The announcement will have to be made about the unified business rate. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South referred to the only available figures at the moment. If there is any further information that I can give to the hon. Lady, I shall write to her.

The hon. Lady also referred to the employment of local people. A European Community directive clearly states that it is not mandatory that local people should be employed. I do not believe that there is any intention to alter that directive. On Second Reading the hon. Lady made it clear that she wanted the Government to do all that they could to encourage the employment of local people. I support that view, but we cannot make the employment of local people mandatory.

The Government have achieved considerable success with the Merseyside development corporation. The vast majority of those who are employed on construction work and in manufacturing, both in new firms and in expanding firms, are local people. That gives me the confidence to say to the hon. Lady that I am sure that that can be replicated on Teesside. We want, wherever possible, to encourage the employment of local people, but it is nonsense to say that they will automatically be employed. They cannot be employed unless their skills are up to the standards required by the companies that have vacancies. The Manpower Services Commission must concentrate on dealing with this problem and overcome the mismatch of skills; otherwise, we shall be wasting our time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh referred yet again to boundaries. The boundaries of all the urban development corporations are subject to revision, but they can be revised only by statutory instrument. I have taken

[Mr. Trippier]

on board my hon. Friend's point, and I shall be prepared to look from time to time at the revision of their boundaries.

When the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington moved his amendment, he said that it was a probing amendment, by means of which he could ask a few questions. I am grateful to him for saying that. He knows that his amendments are unnecessary and that the provisions of the Bill apply to all urban development corporations. In the circumstances, I hope that he will feel able to withdraw his amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams referred to neighbourhood schemes. My hon. Friend may be making a mistake by drawing a comparison between urban development corporations and neighbourhood schemes. He believes that they are mutually exclusive, but they are not. A number of initiatives have been taken recently. A few years ago my hon. Friend wrote an excellent book on inner-city regeneration. He referred to the city action teams and to the task forces that have responsibility for neighbourhoods. Estate Action, with which I am familiar, because it operates in my constituency, deals with a clearly defined neighbourhood.

Housing action trusts — which have not yet been announced, but which have been discussed in the recent White Paper—and general improvement areas will not be nullified by the declaration of urban development corporations. It is important that I should write to my hon. Friend to tell him of certain recent initiatives that have been deployed by the London Docklands development corporation, particularly with regard to community support. He might then be encouraged. But if he wished to come back to me afterwards, he would be very welcome to do so.

I hope that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington will now withdraw his amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 4, at end insert—

'(3) Section 1 of this Act shall expire three months after the day it was passed, unless continued in force by an order under this section.

(4) The Secretary of State may by order provide that section 1 of this Act (whether or not in force by virtue of an order under this section) shall continue in force for a period not exceeding 12 months from the coming into operation of the order——

(a) that section 1 of this Act shall cease to be in force; or

(b) that if section 1 of this Act is not for the time being in force it shall come into force again and remain in force for a period not exceeding 12 months from the coming into operation of the order.

(5) Where section 1 of this Act expires by virtue of subsection (3) above or ceases to have effect by virtue of an Order made under sub-section (4) above, the provisions which it replaces shall revive.'.

You, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members will realise that this amendment is moved in a form that is not unusual in the House, in order to try to ensure that there is a regular opportunity to debate the provisions of the Bill. The wording is not mine. The Minister knows that the wording of the amendment is to be found in other legislation. The most specific and obvious example is the wording that is to be found in the emergency provisions legislation relating to Northern Ireland. The Act continues in force only by order of the House.

I have sought to amend the Bill in this way because of the general issue that we debated to some extent on Second Reading and again in Committee: the change in the procedure whereby, instead of the grant-funding of urban development corporations being subject to specific approval by order of the House, it will be controlled by other methods, to which the Minister referred when he opened the Second Reading debate.

One of the significant elements of the Government's inner-city policy is that they intend to use urban development corporations — I accept that they have a right to do that—as a major platform for regenerating inner cities. There are two original ones, four more recently established and there may be some others established. The mechanism in the past has been that, both in the original Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and in the New Towns and Urban Development Act 1985, there was an upper limit to the amount of grant, variable by order to a second limit, and that within the constraints of both Acts Ministers have been able to come to the House to seek approval to increase the amount. The Bill proposes that the grant funding process will go. The Minister has conceded that the House will exercise control in future, first, by the general voting of Supply in the general Estimates debates and votes, and, secondly, by any control mechanism that is able to be exercised through Select Committees, in particular the Select Committee on the Environment.

As all hon. Members know, there is always a problem about considering in detail in general debates the votes of funds for specific projects. A debate about how much money should be given to the programmes of the Department of the Environment would not be able to concentrate in the same way as debates in the past about specific funding for the six or more urban development corporations.

Mr. Spearing: It could be more than six.

Mr. Hughes: I agree with the Minister that there is a control mechanism. However, there are all sorts of other matters that hon. Members may wish to raise in general debates, and the ability to focus on the specific issue of the funding of urban development corporations will not be there. As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, there may well be more than six urban development corporations. The more there are, the less likely it is that concerns will be able to be explicitly voiced and answered by Ministers, and that is because of the time given to debate Supply.

The Minister can probably anticipate my objection about debates before Select Committees being adequate. Of course, all hon. Members are not able to take part in debates in Select Committee as they are not members, unlike debates on orders in the House, which are open to all hon. Members. The more urban development corporations there are, the more hon. Members there will be with constituency interests who will want to intervene. However, they may not be members of either the Select Committee on the Environment or the Public Accounts Committee and it is inevitable that some hon. Members

will not be able to raise their concerns in Committee and that the debate that we have had in the past on the Floor of the House will be lost.

The best way of voicing the concern that I expressed on Second Reading and that my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick upon Tweed (Mr. Beith) expressed in Committee is to urge the House to give hon. Members an opportunity to renew the Act annually. That is how the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 applies. The Government bring before the House an order to renew, vary or reactivate the Act. The debate would take an hour or so and would be limited to those hon. Members who wanted to attend. The debate is about accountability.

The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said earlier that the Government are concentrating an enormous amount of public resources on urban development corporations. There is not only the general public concern about the sheer relative size of the public Exchequer contribution but the explicit local concern about the local regeneration of areas by Government agencies. Particularly when the Government agency meets in secret, there clearly is a risk that what it does is not open to proper debate and that the progress, success, failure or relative benefit or otherwise will not be able to be debated properly. It cannot be debated in the local authorities because they are not empowered to do that, so it has to be debated here.

I ask the Minister to say that there is a proper concern for the accountability for the funding of development corporations, whatever their number, that the experience of the six years of their existence confirms that concern, and that therefore the Government will accept the amendment to have an annual debate and an annual vote on the continuance of the change in procedure that is proposed in the Bill.

6.15 pm

Mr. Trippier: It is clear that the hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and I will not agree. I do not want to catalogue the various mechanisms that are available to hon. Members, as I touched on them on Second Reading and again in Committee. The bottom line of what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting is why the system has changed since 1980. The simple answer is that there were features that, with the benefit of experience in those seven years, could be improved. Since the UDC concept was introduced in 1980, there have been three pieces of primary legislation.

As I have indicated, there are plenty of opportunities for hon. Members to raise the issue of urban development corporations. The hon. Gentleman has catalogued the two most important ones, but there is the investigation by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, which very much involves the House and—I know that the hon. Gentleman will smile when I say this—there are Opposition days when hon. Members may choose to debate UDCs, and there are also opportunities during Adjournment and other debates.

I urge the hon. Gentleman to reconsider his amendment. If he will not withdraw it, I urge my hon. Friends to vote against it.

Mr. Hughes: I anticipated the Minister's resistance, and I have consulted my colleagues. We will exercise our opportunities to debate the matter on Adjournment debates and on whatever other occasions arise. Opposition days are inevitably limited to the major Opposition party. The National Audit Office is conducting an investigation at the moment on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee and I understand that it is to report in January. However, our experience has been that those opportunities for debate have not been sufficient. I ask that the amendment be put to the House.

Question put. That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 18, Noes 202.

Division No. 81] **[6.20 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Howells, Geraint
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Matthew Taylor.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*

Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

Order for Third Reading read.

6.28 pm

Mr. Trippier: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am anxious to be brief. We had a long debate on Second Reading, we had a longish debate in Committee and we have had a longish debate again today while considering some of the amendments that have been tabled. I have already mentioned the constructive contributions that have been made in the various debates by hon. Members.

I am anxious to outline three main points. First, the primary legislation to amend paragraph 8 of schedule 31 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 is necessary if expenditure plans for UDCs are to be carried through. The Bill removes grant-in-aid received by UDCs from the cumulative total that is subject to the statutory limit. In the Government's view the combination of the public expenditure planning process and Parliament's various controls over voted money are fully adequate in themselves. A further statutory limit of this nature is unneccessary and is an inappropriate means of controlling the grant paid to a collection of bodies.

Secondly, the Bill defines the borrowing that is subject to this statutory limitation.

Thirdly, given the role of borrowing in UDC financing, it sets a lower statutory limit on the total amount of outstanding borrowing by UDCs.

This is a simple Bill, designed for all UDCs to carry on their vital task of regenerating urban areas. It rationalises the statutory financial limit while retaining a proper degree of parliamentary control.

6.30 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I do not intend to detain the House long. Suffice to say that the business in Committee covered the important point that we wanted to raise—the involvement of local authorities in UDCs and the great need for local communities' interests to be taken into consideration on any development. The amendment that we tabled in Committee expounded our concerns about the financing of UDCs.

Reference has been made to the introduction of mini UDCs, and we hoped that the Minister would give more information about their involvement and introduction. Sadly, that has not been forthcoming, but we are advised that we may receive some information shortly. Again, I plead with the Minister for more involvement with local authorities. A number of hon. Members who have spoken today and in Committee have served on local authorities. I hope that local authorities will be more involved in any further introduction of UDCs.

Hon. Members have expressed doubt about whether there would be any impact on or advantage to local communities by introducing further UDCs. Reference has been made to the rate support grant orders that were administered under a former Labour Government. I should make it clear that rate support grant orders under the Labour Government were more substantial than they are under the present one. I hope that the Minister will consider allowing local authorities to have some input into the development of UDCs.

As to local authorities and their partnership with UDCs, I must tell the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that there is ample evidence that that partnership is developing in inner cities and urban areas. A splendid understanding has developed between local authorities and private developers, which has led to much co-operation between local authorities and the private sector. There is no reason why that co-operation should not be allowed to continue. A substantial number of Labour-controlled authorities have entered into agreements with private operators to develop town centres and urban areas. I make a plea that that co-operation should be allowed to continue.

If local authorities were allowed sufficient resources, there could be continuing co-operation and a greater interest in community development on behalf of people in those communities. It is important to encourage development and urban regeneration in local authority areas.

The Minister referred to the Tory party manifesto. One must take note of what was expressed in it. It said that the Tories want to set up UDCs where local authorities are failing to tackle the problems. Will the Minister say what local authorities are failing to tackle the problem, and

perhaps we could analyse why they are experiencing difficulties with urban regeneration in their areas? It is unfair and not good practice to commit local authorities to redevelopment in urban areas because of the Tory manifesto. Can we identify how local authorities have been failing in their responsibilities? Will the Minister explain why the Government believe that local authorities have not been carrying out urban redevelopment?

If local authorities were given the same resources as UDCs, we would obtain better results for communities than is presently the case with regard to mini UDCs. I hope that the Minister will take note of what the Tory manifesto says.

My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) asked about the introduction of UDCs and what, if a local authority suggested that there was no need for a mini UDC in its area, the outcome would be. The Minister replied that there would be a mandatory introduction of UDCs if local authorities objected to such a development. However, will the Minister take into consideration the interests of the community? My hon. Friend referred to a letter from Martin Laing in *The Times* on 6 October. It said:

"The success of London Docklands, which is a uniquely favoured area next to one of the world's major financial centres, should not lead the Government into believing or expecting that £1 of public expenditure will produce the same £4 to £6 of private investment in less favoured areas".

He referred also to the deprived areas of the north.

Against that background, I suggest that there should be greater consultation of and involvement with local authorities because everyone in them — particularly in the north, but throughout the United Kingdom — is concerned about what is taking place in communities. Martin Laing said that the Government should not model UDCs on the London Docklands development corporation because they will not work out the same. Those are the words not of Labour Members, but of the chairman of John Laing plc.

I appeal to the Minister to consider the issues with regard to urban regeneration and communities. The people who have been elected in these areas want to bring about their redevelopment. The Minister has seen the results of what can happen if there is co-operation between local authorities and private operators. I hope that such co-operation will be allowed to continue. I hope that some of the resources given to mini urban development corporations and major urban development corporations will be directed towards local authorities and that they will be given a fair opportunity to develop their areas. It is important to allow local authorities to develop their communities. I hope that the Minister will consider the points that we have raised.

6.39 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Members of Sheffield city council are allowed four minutes to speak. As a member of that council, I know that if one's speech is not finished within four minutes the silence is deafening. I shall try to finish this speech within four minutes.

Land and buildings in inner cities are a jigsaw of ownership and problems. Somehow, the road layout and services do not match what is needed now or in the future. A method of bringing them into common ownership for redevelopment is needed, and urban development corporations provide it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) stated in similar vein, although my area has not agreed to have a UDC, it would be grateful to have a UDC, whether it be mini, maxi, GT, GL, saloon or estate. We are prepared to accept one, whatever its form.

Sheffield has been making noises about the form of an urban development authority. As one who lives in Sheffield and works in the east end of the city, from which the heart of its former industry has been torn, I appreciate the fact that there are derelict buildings and derelict land and the remains of the names of famous companies, which are either in the shadows or no longer exist. Rejuvenation is necessary. The only way in which I can envisage that happening in Sheffield, if what is happening there is symptomatic of the problems in other areas, is through urban development corporations. I hope that Sheffield will be considered for one.

The Opposition's argument is that the pudding must be tested, examined and improved. That will not give the impetus needed in inner cities and inner urban areas to enable them to progress. The Government are prepared to prime the pump and businesses are prepared to set up in those areas. In the east end of Sheffield, developers are prepared to move in, with council approval, to create jobs in a £160 million scheme. Those jobs will spin off into the outer urban areas, to suppliers, manufacturers, contractors, utilities, transport—the list goes on. That does not differ from the UDC concept. I hope that the funds that are made available will be flexible. By "flexible" I do not mean that the money should be made to go a long way. I hope that money will be found for other areas.

My hon. Friend the Minister, when he tours Sheffield on 7 December, will see that something is needed to bring the city back to its former glory. Sheffield is not on its own; other areas need the injection of an urban development corporation to return to their former prosperity. Sheffield is bidding to stage the World Student Games, and Government co-operation and funding are needed. Sheffield needs some form of cash through an urban development corporation. Other areas are in a similar position. Therefore, I urge hon. Members to support the Bill.

6.42 pm

Mr. Spearing: The speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) illustrates the dilemma of hon. Members in dealing with the Bill. We all want to talk about urban development corporations. But the Bill is not about that; it is about how the Government will be enabled to finance them. The Bill does not contain a penny more for UDCs. The estimates deal with that. The Bill gives the Minister power to provide bigger globules of money without coming to the House. Despite my hon. Friends' aspirations, I fear that the Bill, in giving those greater globules of money, will be contrary to the interests of local government and against the interests of parliamentary scrutiny, despite what the Minister said.

More money means more cash means more power to the Minister in bigger blobs. It means fewer statutory instruments to come before the House, less scrutiny and less "glasnost", to use the present jargon. But that is what the House is about in terms of democracy. Although I understand my hon. Friends' aspirations, in view of my experience of the London Docklands development corporation, I regard the Bill as a step backward in terms of parliamentary scrutiny and expenditure of taxes. Hon.

[Mr. Spearing]

Members have lost sight of that fundamental point, but it is worth putting it on record on Third Reading, because that is what Third Reading is about.

The Bill will give the Minister greater arbitrary powers. He will be able to scatter patronage around and to consult all sorts of people with ideas in local government, asking, "Would you think of this? Would you think of that?" If I were the Minister, I would scatter these mini UDCs around like sweeties from a tin. I asked the Minister whether he could tell us how many mini UDCs there were, but he did not give the answer. I wonder whether he would like to give it now.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) asked that question as well. I am certainly not in a position to give the number. I simply stick by what I said on Second Reading and in Committee: that we hope to make an announcement before the end of the year.

Mr. Spearing: I am not surprised by that. It probably supports my thesis, which, I hasten to add, is based not on any leaks from Whitehall but on my knowledge of how these things happen.

I raised these problems before and the Minister replied on 3 July 1987 in column 193 of *Hansard*. He said that £7·9 million was spent by the LDDC on consultancies. Imagine an area in London the size of Hyde park, Kensington gardens and Green park put together and being given planning permission for development without a public inquiry having been held. That is what we face in the royal docks in the area given over to planning for the LDDC. Some of the orders made under this legislation will not apply to that area, but that is the sort of animal that is rising statutorily from section 135 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

The Bill involves statutory slippage. Clearly, we are losing control over the way in which the hard-taxed taxpayers' money is spent. This legislation will act in a derogatory way towards local government. But it is not just this legislation. The housing action trusts may be given powers by Parliament and will probably act in much the same way as the UDCs. The White Paper said that they would, although it remains to be seen whether they will get such huge sums—up to £100 million—without being subject to parliamentary control. The money will not go far if there is a 15 per cent. tax on new build—just as there is 15 per cent. VAT on repairs. We may have to face that next week or in the new year if the European Court imposes that decision on the House.

6.48 pm

Mr. Steen: It is probably fitting that I am the last Conservative Back Bencher to speak in the debate. Unlike some Opposition Members, I do not ask that the Bill be scrapped. I support it. Under the previous legislation, expenditure in inner urban areas could not exceed £600 million or a greater sum not exceeding £800 million as specified by the Secretary of State, by order subject to approval by the House. We are talking about putting more public money into urban areas without reference to the House, and I have nothing against that.

I have been a Member for over 12 years, and during that time the House has debated urban areas and inner cities ad nauseam. We have had the urban aid programme, community development projects, the young volunteer force, neighbourhood studies, quality of life studies, inner-urban area studies, references to the cycle of their deprivation, comprehensive community programmes, partnerships—I do not know what has happened to them—a White Paper in 1977 on the inner cities, the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978, enterprise zones and freeports, and there are now urban development corporations.

There has been a huge spectacle of Government-financed schemes. Some of them have been very good. However, the inner cities continue to decline. They look worse and the people who live in them are deprived. The urban development corporations, which I fully support, represent another means of pouring public money into the inner cities. I remain unconvinced that they will have better results than the other schemes on which tens of thousands of millions of pounds have been spent. I would support the Minister wherever he cares to take me. I would support him in any worthwhile scheme because he is a Minister with flair and imagination, as well as courage. However, I question whether the UDCs will lead to a greater revival of the inner cities than other schemes have achieved.

One of the beauties of the urban development corporations, evident in the London Docklands development corporation area, is that they have attracted private funds. Their importance must lie in the way in which they have levered private money behind public money. No doubt the Minister would say that he is so enthusiastic about urban development corporations because of the leverage of private money behind public money. What interests me is whether the leverage could be in a different form and whether the funds could be used through the urban development corporations in better ways. For example, perhaps the Government could provide money to be used by the urban development corporations in the form of industrial revenue bonds or municipal bonds—a subject raised during Question Time this afternoon. In that way, private investment could be pumped into inner-city areas. Private individuals, companies and institutions could invest in the inner cities by purchasing tax-exempt bonds.

I question—although not critically—whether £800 million or £1,000 million pumped into inner areas will really change them. Of course, if we pump £100 million into the environment it is bound to change, but that will not necessarily revive the inner cities. I believe that we shall not revive the inner cities by pouring public money into them. We shall revive them if that public money is poured in with private sector money coming in behind and if the people who live there are involved not only in decision-making but in helping themselves. The Conservative Government's philosophy is to help people to stand on their own feet and to help them to help themselves. I support the urban development corporations but there is a danger that the corporations will exclude the community and will simply go into areas and do their own thing. If that happens, areas may be tidied up or cleaned up and new buildings may be built, but we shall not achieve the revival that is so much needed in the run-down inner-city areas.

My experience of the House is that when one is asked to speak for a long time, the Whips are very clear about what one should be doing, and that the same applies when one is asked to speak for a short time. I can see by the

expression on your face, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have perhaps said enough to make my point plain. The Minister is smiling, and it is quite clear that he agrees with some of my comments. I support the Bill, but I hope that the Minister will bear in mind that pouring more money into the inner cities will not solve problems.

6.52 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: Nobody can deny that the inner cities need regenerating, that part of that process requires money and that some of that money will have to come from the taxpayer, via the Government. It is quite clear that some of the money must come from the private sector, too. However, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, the Bill does not concern any of those propositions. It deals with the regulation of the process by which public money goes into the UDCs. As the Minister knows, he and I take different views about the mechanism that he has chosen in the Bill.

In 1980, when the original procedure was set up, and in 1985, when the procedure was amended by further legislation, we gave the Government the power to make £800 million available. My hon. Friends and I argued that the decision about the amount of taxpayers' money that should be made available via the Government to the urban development corporations as a means of regenerating the inner cities should be made by the House. That is why, on Report, I sought to amend the Bill to include a provision to give us that controlling mechanism. The amendment was defeated and the Bill remains unamended.

My scepticism, doubts and dissatisfaction remain. The Bill does not provide for sufficient scrutiny. As the hon. Member for Newham, South said, it will place too much power in the hands of the Government and not enough in the hands of other agencies. The Minister will know that my view is taken on the basis not of remote observation but of practical day-to-day participation in the life of a constituency where a development corporation has been at work for six years. It is noticeable and interesting that the people who are most critical of development corporations are those who live in and represent the areas in which they operate. Those who observe from afar are less critical.

I shall not congratulate the Minister as much as some of his Back Benchers have congratulated him, but I respect his commitment to his job and his enthusiasm. However, the Government's approach is sometimes in danger of being superficial. The time that they spend on the inner cities is sometimes encapsulated in timetables, such as the Minister's timetable for his visit to the London Docklands development corporation last week. His office was kind enough to send me a copy. It reads as follows:

"10.30 You arrive at the Visitors Centre, Canary Wharf, Isle of Dogs to be met by Chairman and Chief Executive. Coffee. View. Audio visual.
11.30 Depart for helicopter tour over Docklands at 11.40
11.55 Ground tour of Docklands.
1.00 Lunch aboard the Dutch sailing barge 'Leven'.
2.30 Depart."

I do not think that the Minister can have met hundreds — he certainly cannot have met thousands — of real docklands residents or workers. Like the Prime Minister at the beginning of the general election campaign, Ministers are in danger of falling into the trap of seeing those who manage developments without speaking to the recipients of the developments—the local residents.

On Second Reading I put to the Minister the figures that showed a net loss of jobs in London docklands since 1981. I note that the Department of the Environment press release about the Minister's speech to the CBI last week, which must be true, says:

"He drew the conference's attention to Urban Development Corporations which have brought new life to areas which have suffered serious decline. And he urged the conference to look at London's Docklands and the 10,000 jobs created there."

That is perfectly true, but the Minister did not tell the CBI the net figure for jobs created because it would have been a negative number. As people in America have discovered, half the truth is often nowhere near the whole truth.

It is interesting to compare unemployment in the docklands boroughs with unemployment in the area of the docklands boroughs covered by the LDDC since it was set up. In Tower Hamlets and Southwark, unemployment rose by 42·5 per cent. and 49 per cent. respectively. Those are large figures. In September 1987 the figure for Southwark was 19·1 per cent. — more than it was in 1983, once the docklands had got going, when it was 17·8 per cent. The same applies in Tower Hamlets and Newham. There has been no marked decline in unemployment.

The most telling figure is that relating to the areas of the boroughs in the development corporation area. The number of unemployed people has increased in two of the three boroughs. In Southwark the figure has increased marginally from 1,506 to 1,519. In Newham, the figure has increased from 1,669 to 1,789. Overall, the number of unemployed in London docklands areas has risen from 6,997 in 1983 to 7,012 in 1987.

Mr. Spearing: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is not at all surprising to us in docklands? People outside think that the development corporation s working for local people, but we know that the LDDC's plans are designed not to help local people but to enable developers to come in and get as much as they can. Therefore, we hope that any mini UDCs elsewhere will have different purposes.

Mr. Hughes: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is an indicator that, even though there are party political differences, there has never been a difference in understanding of or reaction to the LDDC between the four London docklands Members of Parliament. They have been equally critical, for the same reasons, because they have observed the same consequences. I wish to make a couple of points, which I hope the Minister will take on board as they reflect the concerns that we have expressed over many years.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has raised an additional point, but what he said was not true. The authority currently controlled by the alliance has, while being controlled by it, worked extremely closely with the LDDC. I am therefore surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not make that point on behalf of his party. Of course, in the past there was animosity, but we hope that that is gradually being blown away.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make comparisons, he must compare like with like. My figures are that more than 10,000 jobs have been created since 1981, with only 3,500 lost. If he is taking 1981 as the base date, that is the comparison that he should make.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister and I debated the figures on Second Reading. He knows that many of the new jobs are

[Mr. Hughes]

transferred jobs—jobs that bring workers with them. The number of jobs created and available for the local work force has actually declined. I am happy to go through the figures with him, but the ones that I have seen—they are Government figures, not my figures—show that the number of new jobs has declined, not risen. That is a severe indictment of the past six years.

The Minister's point about co-operation and collaboration is, rightly, very important. We must ensure that we maximise future benefits for the local communities—in labour, housing, environment and regeneration. That is why there was such a furious debate yesterday, during the Local Government Bill Committee, about the local labour clause in relation to local government powers. We wait with interest to hear what the officials said at the European Commission today when it debated that very subject.

I and my colleagues have always argued—and it is why Tower Hamlets has practised it—that partnership is needed. There should be a three-way partnership in regenerating all inner cities and urban areas—central Government, local government and other agencies, be they the private sector, voluntary bodies or the like. It is because local authorities have no power to intervene in the docklands area decisions and in the development corporations that the concept of development corporations, as presently constructed, has met with objections.

It is true that my colleagues in Tower Hamlets have co-operated and nominated someone to sit on the board. They have worked with the LDDC much more than the Labour administration in Southwark—an administration that I have criticised since the day I was elected to this House. However, there has been no real partnership and, because of that failure, I and my colleagues are unhappy about the Bill.

I understand that an announcement about further UDCs is imminent. It may include a provision for the LDDC area to be extended. If that is true, it would be a significant announcement. Whatever areas the Government have in mind, I ask that, before making any final announcement, the Minister should put the proposals out to consultation—the areas, the budget and the corporate plan—so that there can be real partnership in the further extension of urban development.

I am not against urban development, but I am against a change in the structure that takes away accountability. As I said, if the Minister is not prepared to concede that, the matter should be more accountable, for that reason specifically. I and my colleagues will divide the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 186, Noes 20.

Division No. 82] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Beith, A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Howells, Geraint
Kirkwood, Archy
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Malcolm Bruce.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Scottish Development Agency Bill

Not amended, considered.
Order for Third Reading read.
Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

7.15 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I assume that the Minister has moved the Third Reading formally because he wishes to respond to the points that hon. Members will make as the debate unfolds, although I do not think it will take too long. Indeed, had the Government Whips acted with any flexibility or sense of responsibility, the whole thing would have been over a long time ago. But they insisted on moving the closure on Second Reading, thus taking the debate into a second day and running it on much longer than was necessary. It was entirely the fault of the Government Whips and had nothing to do with the Opposition.

This debate gives us an opportunity to repeat some important points about the Scottish Development Agency. There is still a question in the minds of many Scottish people and in the Scottish press about regional aid in Scotland and its relationship to the SDA. At the recent forum organised by the Scottish Council at Gleneagles, when all the great and the good were present——

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Where was the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Maxton: I was not present.

Mr. Salmond: I was there.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Gentleman may be included among the great and the good in Scotland, but I am not. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was there, and although I offered to replace him, he did not accept my offer.

Following that conference, there was confusion between what the Department of Trade and Industry believes and what the Scottish Office believes is happening about regional aid in Scotland. Neither on Second Reading nor during the Committee stage of the Bill did Ministers clarify who is responsible for regional aid policy in Scotland. The Secretary of State for Scotland insisted that he was in charge. Lord Young, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, rightly insists that he, and no one else, is in charge of regional aid in Scotland.

Is a review of regional aid being undertaken? The Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of State say that there is no review, but Lord Young said clearly at Gleneagles:

"I am examining from the ground up all our regional aid."

He intends to examine everything that is done in his Department, so there must be a question mark over the future of regional aid in Scotland. There is also a question mark over the amount of money that is being spent by the SDA. The Minister must give us a commitment about the extra £24 million which the Secretary of State boasted he will spend on regional policy in Scotland. Some of us believe that that £24 million is merely roll-over from underspend in this financial year and has nothing to do with new money, but the Minister may wish to dispute that. We shall be interested to see how he intends to spend the money.

Regional development grant is not the way in which to spend money now, because it is difficult to obtain it

[Mr. Maxton]

quickly. The Minister should allocate that £24 million between the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. That would allow a much better use of the £24 million than might otherwise be the case. I hope that the Minister will clear up that matter and, even at this late stage, make it clear that we should be spending more money on the Scottish Development Agency.

Many hon. Members have commented during our various debates on the cuts in real terms that have been made in the money that is provided by the Government to the SDA. The Minister's reply has always been that the SDA has been receiving more money from its investments, so it is generating its own income and we should not interfere with it. It is marvellous that the SDA is generating its own finance, but that should allow it to do more, because the Government should allocate increasing amounts of money to keep pace with inflation; then the SDA will generate more money, which will allow more money to be invested in the Scottish economy to create jobs. That is what the SDA should be about.

The Government seem to take a different line. They are schizophrenic about the SDA. They want it to generate some jobs so that they can boast about them but, at the same time, the SDA runs contrary to all their views on the free market economy. So they want to push it into the background and downgrade it as much as possible, while using its facilities to create what jobs they can.

In conclusion, I want to quote from articles in *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* that have appeared in the past two weeks. They concern the future of the Scottish Development Agency under its new director, Mr. Iain Robertson. According to Mr. Alf Young, who is a respected and unbiased economics journalist in Scotland, and who wrote a long article in the *Glasgow Herald* on Monday about the SDA, there is speculation in the SDA about which the Government should say something to the House. Staff in the SDA headquarters in Glasgow are worried about whether they will continue in their jobs. As an hon. Member representing a constituency in Glasgow, I am concerned about any loss of jobs from the area, although I accept that there may be a need for some devolution of SDA functions outwards to other parts of Scotland. I do not believe that anyone would object to such a devolution of power to other parts of Scotland to allow SDA decisions on investment to be taken at more local levels than they are now. However, if the other rumours are correct, we are right to express concern about them. One of the articles says:

"But, coming as it does in the wake of the Treasury/Scottish Office review into the work of the SDA, a root-and-branch restructuring will inevitably raise fears that the agency's role, in a Thatcherite economic climate, is again going to change. Those who claim to detect within the SDA a power struggle between old-style interventionists, loyal to the ethos which led to it being set up in 1975, and a market-orientated faction, committed to the Mathewson view that the SDA should work with the grain of market forces, will be watching closely for signs of which side emerges in the ascendancy.

Others, who believe that battle was won some time back by the free-marketeers, will be looking for evidence of any hidden agenda that Robertson, a career civil servant before he came to Bothwell Street, might be hatching in collaboration with the Scottish Office to push the SDA further into the arms of the private sector."

It would concern us greatly if there were any movement to put the SDA yet further into the hands of the private sector. Later in the article, speaking of the investment department of the SDA, Alf Young writes:

"Investment, even when its own portfolio of £26·2m invested in 127 companies is boosted by the £2m a year the agency puts into small businesses, may not have a long-term place in Robertson's scheme of things. It has, arguably, become much more risk averse since the days of the Stonefield Vehicles saga (although the SDA's exposure in the receivership of Livingston-based Integrated Power Semiconductors runs to £2m).

The investment division's guidelines now hardly distinguish it from many private sector sources of finance, and there is open talk in Bothwell Street that it might be privatised, either as an operational unit or by progressively liquidating its portfolio."

If the investment side should liquidate its portfolio, or hand it over in some way to the private sector, the money that that investment portfolio generates to allow the SDA to invest in our companies will no longer exist. There will therefore be a general cutback in the SDA's ability to carry out its functions. I hope the Minister will take this opportunity to put our minds at rest about the article's implications, and make it clear that any restructuring of the SDA will be an internal one, perhaps to improve the managerial structure of the organisation. There is no doubt that parts of it have grown, like Topsy, all over the place, and it needs tightening up. but the Minister should not allow parts of it to be privatised, or allow it to liquidate its entire portfolio, and he should give us a commitment that the SDA will be able to use its money directly for investing in industry and developing jobs. Far from retaining it in its present form, we hope that the Minister might now see that the SDA has been a success since 1975 through its intervention in the economy, and it requires more money and greater expansion so that it can create yet more jobs in the Scottish economy—because under this Government they are badly needed.

7.27 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): This is an opportunity to reiterate some of the points from our earlier proceedings on the Bill, which the Minister has still to answer effectively.

My first point — it leads on from what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said—is that there is no real question of who is in charge of regional policy in Scotland. Undoubtedly, Whitehall is in charge of it, and not the Secretary of State for Scotland. The real point about regional aid policy over the past 10 years is not who is in charge, but the remarkable decline in the regional aid budget to less than half what it was 10 years ago. I accept that part of that decline occurred before the Government came to office in 1979. It has been paralleled by the decline in the SDA's own budget.

Whatever is said about the SDA's overall budget, the Minister must acknowledge — it is in a parliamentary answer — that the SDA's contribution from the Government has declined in real terms from £104 million when the Government came to power to £89 million this year. That represents a real decline of 15 per cent. In Committee, the Minister described that as a sign of success. No doubt he also considers it a sign of success that, as the hon. Member for Cathcart said, the Government and Scottish Office have underspent by £20 million on regional development grant this year. Does the Minister want to square the circle and explain how an

underspend in regional development grant fits the picture that he paints of the Scottish economy moving forward with plenty of investment and investors wanting to take up regional development grant?

As has rightly been said, the Secretary of State for Scotland has been claiming widely that he has gained another £24 million for next year's regional development grant budget. However, that is merely a roll-over from the underspend of last year. The Secretary of State for Scotland must be the first person ever to get into serious trouble through picking his own pocket!

The vision of the Scottish economy that the Government seek to portray does not square with the facts. In terms of overall industrial production, the Scottish economy is still performing at a lower level than in 1980 and its unemployment level is the second highest on the British mainland. Even in the review of the Scottish Development Agency carried out by the Industry Department for Scotland and the Treasury, which strove desperately to say nice things about the Scottish economy under this Government—the best they could offer was that things were no better, they were much the same. Page 22 says:

"In 1984 gross domestic product per head (in Scotland) was 96 per cent. of the United Kingdom average compared with 97 per cent. in 1975".

when the SDA was established.

The reality is that Scotland is last out of the recession in the United Kingdom, and instead of being increased to combat these problems, the SDA budget is declining in real terms, as are the regional development grants. The Government have completely missed the economic opportunity of which the Scottish Development Agency was established 10 years ago to take advantage.

My second point is a recurring theme in the contributions to debates such as this by the Scottish National party. It is about the direction of SDA funding. Surely the saddest thing in the review of the SDA, about which I have spoken, was the revelation that over the past 10 years the net proportion of the SDA budget in equity risk investment in the Scottish economy has declined from 25 per cent. to a mere 2 per cent. I should like the Minister to explain how, with a net expenditure on investment of about £2 million, the SDA can seriously expect to regenerate the Scottish economy. There seems to be no real reason for decline, because the analysis of the effectiveness of SDA investment gave the agency more or less a clean bill of health.

Even on the tiny investment budget that can be deployed by the Scottish Development Agency, the review calculated that, between 1981 and 1985, the agency successfully created about 10,000 net jobs at a cost per job of about £1,000. That is a remarkable bargain, and surely it is an argument for a vast expansion in the SDA budget so that it can take the opportunity offered by the sectors of growth in the Scottish economy that it has been doing so much work to identify.

My third point deals with the direction of Government economic policy in Scotland. Despite what the Minister said on Second Reading about turning the emphasis to developing indigenous companies, the reality is that the only thrust of Government economic policy in Scotland is to attract mobile inward investment from overseas. In part that is welcome, and nobody would seriously deny that inward investment can bring great benefits to an economy. However, it is all a matter of proportion and many people in Scotland know to their cost that an economy that is totally dependent on mobile inward investment is especially vulnerable when the winds of international recession blow.

We would like to see from the Minister a real commitment to developing indigenous companies in Scotland. There are some signs that his words on Second Reading will not be carried through into practice. He may well remember that on Second Reading many hon. Members expressed concern about the PRIDE and DRAW schemes. These are important schemes in the rural areas of Scotland. They have small budgets, but have proved important for rural workshops and for giving grants to rural businesses. Elsewhere, the Minister said that the schemes were to be refinanced, and announced a budget of £5 million over three years. My understanding is that, far from being enhanced, the grant element in the schemes is to be drastically cut. I should like some assurance from the Minister that that will not be the case.

If the hon. Member cannot give that assurance, at least he should give some hope to the many small businesses in Scotland which applied under the previous scheme. They were left in the lurch because of the exhaustion of resources and had the rug pulled from under them. The Minister has said that those businesses will get priority in the application of funds for the new scheme. Can he also give us an assurance that they will get treatment on no worse terms than they would have received under the previous grant element in the scheme?

My final comment is about a wider matter than those that are dealt with in the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot refer to wider matters. On Third reading we must restrict ourselves to what is in the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confine himself to what is in the Bill.

Mr. Salmond: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall certainly do so. Sixty-two Scottish Members would like to see a substantial increase in the Scottish Development Agency budget. As a public sector body, the agency should have a prime role in leading Scotland out of the recession. To do that it needs an adequate budget, and that means a vast increase in its present budget. Despite the support of the vast majority of Scottish MPs, we cannot bring our views to bear upon the Government or the Minister.

It may be that the Minister will have a remarkable conversion, such as he has had in the past on the Scottish Development Agency. He was converted to the inward investment role of the agency that he now trumpets although in 1980 he once was very much against it. Until Scottish MPs can provide the answer to the question of how we can bring our majority will to bear on the Government upon the subject of the Scottish Development Agency, or any other Scottish subject, we will not be successful in bringing about the revival of the Scottish economy that we so desperately want to see.

7.37 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I should like to raise one matter that has possibly not been covered as it might have been. It is the matter of the boundaries on which grants are given. I shall give a concrete example concerning the huge and successful Uniroyal tyre factory at Newbridge in

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingstone (Mr. Cook). The bulk of the work force in that factory comes from my constituency. The problem is whether grants should be given on the basis of geographical position or whether some leeway should be given in a case where the work force comes from an area where there is considerable unemployment—a scheduled area such as Linlithgow.

There is a related problem, and perhaps the Scottish Office could look at it. It concerns discussions with the Department of Transport about the very serious Community directive on tyre tread depths. I put down a question on 24 November in which I asked the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has done on accident incidence relative to tyre tread depth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it very difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the Third Reading of this Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: They relate to the question of help for a factory such as that of Uniroyal. There is a way out of this problem and it is by asking the Department of Transport to reconsider its attitude to the European directive on tyre tread depth. The problem would be solved if the depth was brought up to the 2 mm that every Government Department asks of its own vehicles. No Minister's car has a tyre tread depth of less than 2 mm. If that was done it would be a great help to factories such as that of Uniroyal and to the tyre-making industry in Britain. Other matters — such as road safety — would be out of order in discussing this Bill.

There is a problem here and the Department of Transport knows about it. I believe that the Scottish Office knows about it and it has arisen this week in acute form. I do not ask for a reply now, because that would be unreasonable, but perhaps the Scottish Office would consider the matter. It will receive a letter from me in the morning about this and I hope that it will reflect on it.

7.39 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): This small technical Bill has now reached its final stages in the House and as envisaged in 1981 when the Government amended the original provisions in the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, it has given hon. Members the opportunity to examine and discuss the activities of the agency in some detail.

Over the years, the agency has shown its value as a flexible and responsive instrument for encouraging essential changes in the Scottish economy and significant improvements to the environment of Scotland. In the light of recent publicity in the Scottish press about the reports of possible changes to the organisation of the agency, it is not surprising that that should be raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that that is primarily a matter for the agency, as it is an administrative matter.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that Ministers generally welcome and endorse the principles behind the changes to the structure proposed by Mr. Robertson, the chief executive. The Scottish Office will be liaising with the agency on the implementation of the changes and subject to clarification on some points of detail, we see no reason why the changes should not fulfil the desired aims of bringing the agency's structure more in line with its corporate strategy and so improve its delivery mechanism.

I want to elaborate on one or two of the ways in which the changes will be made. The hon. Member for Cathcart supported what he saw as the devolution of some services in order to improve their delivery. That is a desirable development and it has been said that a number of regional offices will be set up in Scotland. The agency intends to create new directorates for enterprise development to pull together the agency's sectoral work on industry and on higher value added services. It also intends to set up a directorate for urban renewal. Those are useful and worthwhile initiatives.

No staff redundancies are planned. There should be improved lines of responsibility, less bureaucracy and, I hope, more job fulfilment and a greater feeling that each individual employed by the agency is contributing personally and directly to its success. That is part of the purpose of the chief executive's plans which I understand he proposes to develop in more detail when he announces his proposals later this week.

Far from implying change in the agency's role, the changes in administration respond to change in the agency's current work and the balance of its priorities and the allocation of its budget. There is no hidden agenda. There is a sharpening up of effectiveness which will bring it closer to its customers as it is a commercial customer-driven organisation.

The hon. Member for Cathcart attempted to lead me into a discussion on regional aid. Bearing in mind your strictures about sticking strictly to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although I generously sought to respond to the hon. Gentleman's inquiries in Committee and on Second Reading, on this occasion I will let the issue of regional aid pass. For the same reason, sadly, I will not be able to comment on the queries raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), although his points will have been noted in *Hansard*.

Mr. Maxton: Before the Minister leaves this point about the restructuring of the agency carried out by Mr. Iain Robertson, will he assure us that there will be no privatisation of the investment department either through direct privatisation by selling it off, or by running down its portfolio of investment?

Mr. Lang: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have no such plans at present to do that. The administration and organisation of the agency is a matter for the agency itself.

Mr. Maxton: I accept that selling the agency off through direct privatisation would not have anything to do with the agency, as it could not do that without legislation. However, presumably the agency could sell off its portfolio without direct Government involvement or legislation.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is putting ideas into my head. Certainly the agency can dispose of its investments as it thinks fit in the light of prevailing market circumstances. That point brings me to the statistics about the budget and investment.

The agency has been disposing of its investments in increasing numbers. This point may underline the difficulty expressed by the hon. Member for Cathcart over the agency's gross and net budget. At the risk of boring the

House, however briefly, I want to repeat the figures. In 1986-87 figures, the gross net budgets in 1978-79, the last years for which the Labour party was responsible for the administration of the agency, were £124·9 million and £102·9 million respectively. In 1986-87, the figures were £130·9 million and £89·2 million respectively. That represents an increase of 4·8 per cent.

It is also significant to explain — this answers the point about the figures raised by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) — that the self-financing element of the agency's expenses, in other words the difference between the gross and net figures, has increased from 20 per cent. in 1978-79 to 40 per cent. this year. Not only has gross budget funding increased, but we are also getting very much better value for money in the use of the receipts and the recirculation of funds.

Mr. Salmond: In the figures that he has just given, does the Minister accept that the Government's contribution to the SDA has declined by 15 per cent?

Mr. Lang: I have not quoted the figure, but the net budget was £99·9 million in 1985-86 figures and those were the figures used by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. The figure is £86·6 million in 1986-87. Far from "admitting" that, I am proclaiming it. That underlines the growing success of the agency's use of resources which has led to that achievement.

I want to provide one or two investment figures to help the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. The hon. Gentleman is worried about the fact that, as he alleges, the proportion of the agency's budget going to investment has decreased from 25 per cent. to 2 per cent. The plain fact is that the figures that he used for 1976 were the provision for investment. The actual outturn was very much less than that. In 1986-87, the outturn, taking account of the reinvestment, of receipts was very much higher. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got his figure of 2 per cent. from. It bears no relation to the actual investment figures.

I want to describe the present trend of investment over the past three years. The amount invested over the past three years has been £6·3 million, £6·2 million and £7·96 million respectively and that has catalysed investment from the private sector of £30·9 million, £72·54 million and £106·7 million. Investment created or protected 4,483 jobs in 1984-85, 5,344 in 1985-86 and 5,619 in 1986-87. That is a remarkable and encouraging story. The agency now holds investments in 820 companies most of which is in the form of relatively small sums because they are investments placed by the agency's small business division.

I believe that I had better not bore the House with more statistics as they have been well ventilated over the past few weeks. The value of agency expenditure can be seen anywhere in Scotland by looking at areas which were once derelict and have now been brought back into constructive use, by new factories occupied by profitable firms, by the existence of high technology industries attracted through the efforts of Locate in Scotland and by our steadily increasing small business sector which has benefited from the agency's advice and assistance.

Over and above this, there is the change of attitude in Scotland which the agency, in accordance with the broad strategic guidance laid down by this Government, has helped to bring about. I refer to the increasing involvement of the private sector in areas which have previously been considered to be the preserve of the public sector; to the increasing realisation by the private sector that the agency is a partner rather than a leader, and to the improvement in Scotland's image abroad as a place which, because of its environment and the skills of its work force, merits major investment.

In order to continue with these important tasks and to complement fully the effects of both the Government's nationwide economic policy and their regional policy it is, of course, necessary to provide the statutory basis for the continued funding of the agency. That is the purpose of the Bill. Although, as I have previously said, the Bill does not determine the annual budget of the agency, which is established separately and in the light of the Government's overall spending priorities, it is essential in order to provide a basis of funding from which those budgets can be met. I am happy to commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Food Protection

7.50 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (England) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1893), dated 5th November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th November, be approved.

The Order consolidates the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (England) (No. 2) Order 1987 and the seven subsequent amendment orders, none of which I will quote, into one order. It does not change their effect or introduce any new restrictions, but it might be helpful if I remind the House that these are the orders under which we were able to carry out the restrictions on movement of sheep as a result of the Chernobyl accident. The matter has been discussed on several previous occasions. The consequences of the terrible accident in Chernobyl have been considerable and people are rightly most concerned. If it is convenient to the House, I hope to speak about one aspect of the order, which has already been raised today, and leave any points which are raised and any other comments to the end of the debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): After the Chernobyl accident, the National Radiological Protection Board estimated that 40 persons—I use the statistical extrapolation — would die of cancer induced by the accident. In the light of the fact that the Government now wish to raise the bq/kg limit, and the fact that the NRPB has changed its assessment of what constitutes a permissible limit, do the Government now wish in any way to interfere in or change the assessment made by the NRPB of the lives lost as a result of the accident?

Mr. Gummer: The Government do not change the recommendations of the NRPB. It is its job to make them. The figures that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is putting together do not connect with each other. The hon. Gentleman must try not to frighten people by making such comments. I shall pursue my argument, and I hope that he will follow it carefully.

One of the problems of discussing this issue is that we must be absolutely straightforward with the public about exactly what happened in all occasions and at all times.

We can only do that if we are absolutely clear that on no occasion must we seek to use the fears of the public for reasons of our own. Those two things must guide us.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I ask the specific question.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have a lot to say when he makes his own speech.

I have been closely concerned with this accident since it happened and my right hon. Friend and I have decided to publish the figures month by month so that everyone will know what they are, and that two things will guide us. First, there should be no question of Ministers not knowing every detail. Secondly, every detail should be published for the country.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be able to understand my concern when, this morning, as I was on the radio, I was challenged because a telex had appeared. I was told:

"David Clark"—

if I may call him that, as it was in the broadcast—

"Shadow Agriculture Spokesman, will today tell the House of Commons that meat contaminated by radiation after Chernobyl did go on sale in Britain, thousands of tonnes of it. He says he can prove it."

I was very much taken aback, because I did not have the telex in my notes. No one had mentioned that telex, which evidently came from the chief scientist of the radiochemical institute. It warned the Government. Therefore, it was a telex that I ought to have had in my documentation.

So once I got off the radio, having explained clearly to the public how outrageous it was to talk about the telex on the radio without it having been mentioned beforehand, I went back, rang the deputy secretary concerned and asked, "Where is this telex from the chief scientist of the radiochemical institute?" I understand that he immediately got on to other people and asked, "Where is this telex?" By 3 o'clock this afternoon we had not got the telex. So I rang the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and he very kindly said that not only would he let me have the telex——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister is hysterical.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman should wait for the hysteria.

The hon. Member for South Shields not only said that I could have the telex but kindly said that he would mention in the debate that I had not got a copy of the telex earlier.

I have a copy of the telex now. It does not come from the chief scientist of the radiochemical institute. It does not come from the Government. It comes from a company called Large and Company. What is Large and Company? It is a consultant company. With whom does it consult? *[Interruption.]* No, not the Labour party directly. It consults with a number of people but particularly with local authorities opposed to nuclear power.

To whom did the telex go? Not to the Ministry of Agriculture but, as I understand it, to the Department of the Environment. What did it say? Let me tell hon. Members first what it was suggested that it said. It was suggested that it said there were very high becquerel readings which would have meant that something should have been done immediately. The telex does not actually say that. In fact, it is difficult to see what it says. What it appears to say is to repeat what the Government had already stated publicly.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Not all debates in the House are broadcast. Will my right hon. Friend make sure that the true statement that he is now giving to the House appears in the later version of the programme to which he has made reference, in which he took part this morning?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will know that it is difficult for me to make sure of that. I am sure the hon. Member for South Shields will want to make the point when he next appears on the "Today" programme.

The telex did not come from whom it was supposed to have come, nor did it go to whom it was said that it went. Nor was the content of it what was implied. It is a telex. That is certainly true. Otherwise none of the statements made is true. It is time that we looked at this carefully. It is said that the Government did some monitoring on 14 May, as if this had suddenly been discovered by the telex, as if the Government had done nothing about it, and as if it was known only now that these things had happened.

I will tell the House how we knew; we knew because the Government published it in a press notice on 13 May. We did the monitoring and we published the information.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend give us some idea why the Opposition needed to adopt these tactics and why they needed to invent telexes from the Ministry of Agriculture which were not from that Ministry? Can he make a copy of the telex available, because it sounds fascinating? Perhaps he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: I shall be happy to place it in the Library. I do not think it is an invented telex. It is certainly a telex. The complaint is that the telex is not what it purported to be.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I will deal with the substantive point in a moment, but in response to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) may I say that the telex has been in the Library of the House since July 1986? The hon. Gentleman could have consulted it if he had taken an interest in it.

Mr. Gummer: I still believe that there is a substantive problem. We are dealing with something which is very frightening. Therefore, we need to deal with it with the greatest respect for truth. If we intend to raise the matter, one of the things we might do is to get in touch beforehand with the person who was supposed to have sent the telex in case we have misunderstood a complex series of notes. The telex is not well written. It is difficult to understand to what it refers. I have asked some very senior scientists to look at it. There are problems as to what the telex meant originally. I would have thought that the hon. Member for South Shields might have felt that this was an occasion to ask the Minister beforehand, out of courtesy, perhaps to explain it, but that did not happen.

The story went on. The hon. Gentleman said that the Government did nothing for seven full weeks after the monitoring. I think it would be interesting for the House to know why we did nothing and exactly what happened. We did not do anything, of course, and we said that we would not do anything. So everybody knew; there was no secret about it. Why did we do nothing? We did nothing because of what we were monitoring. First, we monitored the sheep. These are the sheep that are supposed to have entered the food chain.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They did.

Mr. Gummer: What an odd thing it would be if they entered the food chain because these were 10 kg lambs. I do not know how close the hon. Gentleman is to his farming community but 10 kg lambs are rarely found for sale. Lambs usually have to reach about 30 kg, so they have quite a long way to go. The one thing we knew was that these 10 kg lambs were not wandering off the hillside into a market.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Is it possible that these lambs might have gone to Italy because they like smaller lambs there?

Mr. Gummer: They might have gone to Italy except that they would have had to be about 20 kg. Of course, before they go to Italy or anywhere else they come down off the high hills and they are—we used to say fattened but now we say finished—finished a bit lower down. That is what happens to them. So we know, first, that they are not going to be sold; secondly, they will be brought down to land which is totally non-contaminated or has low contamination; thirdly, they will grow bigger. So the level which is in them becomes a smaller proportion of their total weight. Therefore, if they are above the level originally, when they come to be sold they will be below the level.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I want to finish this because it is complicated and I want to get it absolutely right.

So they were above the level but we kept monitoring them carefully. Why? To make sure that when action was necessary we would take it because the 1,000 bq level is not what the hon. Member for South Shields said; it is not a safety level but an action level. It is the level at which it is decided what programme of action will be taken. We took the decision. We said that at the point at which any meat or anything else entered the food chain we would take the action necessary to make sure that nobody was damaged or endangered by it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No; I shall be happy to give way later, but I want to get the sequence of events right.

The hon. Member for South Shields said that the lambs were innocently sent to market. Innocently? They were being barmily sent to market. Anyone who sent a 10 kg lamb to market would be a natural. What did the hon. Gentleman say? He said that there were thousands of tonnes of it. I happen to know that the hon. Gentleman went today to discover how many tonnes of lamb went through the markets that he quoted. I have got them here—Carlisle, Kendal, Ulverston and Penrith. Having said that thousands of tonnes of contaminated lamb went into the food chain he went today to find out how much had gone through. It is less than 1,000 tonnes of lamb altogether.

So there could not have been thousands of tonnes of contaminated lamb. Why? Because there was very little lamb going through the market at that time and they were all a darned sight bigger than 10 kg. I do not know how many 10 kg lambs one needs to add up to thousands of tonnes, but there were not 1,000 tonnes. I do not want to overdo it; it would be about 600 tonnes. Indeed, I have overdone it because I have shown that the hon. Gentleman was frightening people for party political purposes. That is a scandal.

This is the beginning of a campaign. I never had so many questions put down as about these things. The hon. Gentleman is obviously determined to try to frighten the public unnecessarily. Sometimes one has to warn the public. Sometimes one has to tell the public that things are dangerous and have to be handled extremely carefully. To frighten people when it is unnecessary is outrageous.

We are then told that the Government did not take the necessary measures. The interviewer was so convinced that this was the suggestion—Mr. Redhead is a man of great discernment—that he said:

"You say 7 full weeks—let's go back to when the first warning was issued."

Then we had the bit about the chief scientist at the radiochemical institute. The letter was not sent from him, nor was it sent to him. He does not exist. There is no such person. We are told that we then ignored the situation. We ignored it so much that we monitored it in great detail and,

[Mr. Gummer]

on 20 June, several months before the main market period, we introduced tough regulations, irrespective of the damage that they might do to farmers. We made sure that the people of this country were protected.

At that time the Opposition were prepared to support us in this. They said, "It is our duty to make sure that farmers do not suffer from irresponsible stories. We have got to be very tough, but we will not make the farmers lose their markets. We will make sure that the farmers can honestly say that no contaminated meat which may harm people will reach the market." That is what the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, as shadow Minister, said. Is it possible that he was too responsible to continue in his job?

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The Minister said earlier that he had all the details at his fingertips. Will he tell us how many sheep have been tested in South Yorkshire? Some of my constituents get their drinking water from wells. Has any testing been done on those wells? The Pennines stood a chance of becoming contaminated and the water coming down into those wells might also have been contaminated.

Mr. Gummer: The number of sheep tested was 2,020 and the number found to be contaminated was two. They were contaminated at 1,200 bq instead of 1,000 bq. The safety figure suggested in Sweden is 6,000 bq.

I want to get the sequence of events right. We then did what we said we would do and protected the public. We were supported in that, and the hon. Gentleman's predecessor complimented the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the way in which it had co-ordinated the action. On the radio this morning, the hon. Gentleman said that there was complete confusion within Government ranks. I hope that he will admit that he has wrongly attacked many honourable and decent civil servants who carried out this remarkable act on which his predecessor complimented them. He then said that thousands of tonnes had entered the food chain when there were none. What did he then go on to say? He said that we have a lower safety level than any other European country. I thought I would have a look.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Many.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may take me outside, but I shall tell him what the hon. Member for South Shields said. I checked the typescript of the broadcast. It said:

"any of the other European countries."

Only two other European countries have had problems with meat contamination. Neither of them is in the European Community. One is Norway and the other is Sweden. Both those countries have Socialist Governments. They are both safety conscious. Both of them are extremely careful, not least about the reindeer, which were mainly affected by the problem.

Of course, in Britain we have a level of 1,000 bq. It is not a safety level. It is called an action level in all countries. Sweden's lowest action level was 1,500 bq; Norway's action level was 6,000 bq. Such are the figures. The House may wonder why I have taken such time to cover those details. The reason is all those people out there, listening to the "Today" programme, who have been told that we are not a safe country and that the food that our farmers produce is not safe to eat. The hon. Member for South Shields has done the industry and the country a grave disservice this morning.

The story does not end there. We are concerned to tell the truth, publicly, about these matters. They are true issues and they are issues that must be put forward properly. For that reason, I shall spend a short time discussing Yorkshire. The order would be concerned with Yorkshire if we had any worry about the safety of land in that region. However, Yorkshire has been mentioned and I shall briefly refer to it.

The hon. Member for South Shields spoke of dangerous things in Yorkshire and said that we had only done something because he had told us to do so. The hon. Gentleman said that we knew nothing about the problem, that we had hardly monitored the area and that it was all extremely dangerous. Let me explain our monitoring system. Before the cloud from Chernobyl reached us we made sure that the Meteorological Office produced the best historical rainfall pattern that was possible to ascertain what areas were most likely to be contaminated.

Mr. Frank Cook: Then they were kept secret.

Mr. Gummer: Then we said, publicly, exactly what areas were most likely to have been affected. We commissioned a public report from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to look at all the lichen and vegetation to discover again where the contamination had been greatest. That was done on a nationwide basis.

To check the information received we examined foodstuffs of almost every type, in every county, to compare them against each other. As a result of that and our constant monitoring we then monitored particularly closely those places where there had been greater contamination. Nothing of any kind suggested that the part of Yorkshire in question was one that we should monitor particularly carefully.

As it turns out—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]—we had some evidence that suggested that three things, taken together, were surprising. First, there had been a local rainstorm. Secondly, there had been a patch of land, some 20 acres of moorland, which had been burnt off extremely heavily and the sheep had congregated on that spot. Thirdly, when we came to test those sheep, out of those 2,300 animals, two turned out to have a becquerel level of 1,200. For the rest of this year and the next I could eat animals that had a bequerel level of 1,200. If I ate nothing else but sheepmeat, day in and day out—I would ask the hon. Member for South Shields to do likewise—at the end of that period I would have absorbed as much radioactivity as I would from a routine chest X-ray. No one in this country could possibly eat enough lamb with such a becquerel level to get the equivalent of an average dose resulting from a chest X-ray. However, today the hon. Member for South Shields was frightening people by saying that if they ate lamb from Yorkshire they would become ill. I believe that the farmers have a right to sue him because he has suggested that their products are not fit to eat. Unfortunately, our civil servants cannot sue for the impression given that they have not done their job properly, that they are not protecting the people of this country and that they are not doing what they should do. That is wholly unacceptable and wrong.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): In view of the assurances that the Minister has given us, can he

suggest why it was that, when local authorities and local councils throughout the country—which were concerned about the high rainfall after Chernobyl—made direct phone calls to the Department of the Environment and everywhere else, they were referred to answering machines and received no advice about how to measure radiation?

Mr. Gummer: There was an incident room and I rang it regularly to ensure that it was answering calls and people were not passed on to an answering machine service. I was extremely interested to learn that the local authorities that complained were overwhelmingly those that had a particular view about nuclear power. If anyone suggested that there was some reason why we should do some special testing we did so in case there was any possible chance that we had overlooked something.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my right hon. Friend kindly remind the House that, for at least a part of that dramatic weekend, there was a continual refusal from the Soviet Union to give any information to the world as to what had happened? It was only as a result of the viligance of the Swedish Government that any monitoring was done. The Soviet Union—I well remember, because it was in the midst of my by-election — refused to give any information.

Mr. Gummer: I accept what my hon. Friend has said. If one does not have a free society, the habit of giving information does not come easily.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Cook *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will give way to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) and then I must finish my speech.

Mr. Frank Cook: There are two matters that I wish to raise with the Minister and I should be grateful for his response.

First, does he not agree that the Soviet authorities have been quite uncharacteristically open about the Chernobyl incident — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh yes?"] Hang on a minute. I ask that hon. Members listen to the point before they express any kind of opinion. Is it not true that the Soviet authorities have been uncharacteristically open regarding every specific technical detail about the things that led up to the incident, that happened during the incident and that followed?

Secondly, I am interested in the detailed certainty that the Minister displays when telling us all the steps that were taken and all the security measures that were gathered. If that is the case, why is it that, when other hon. Members and myself were trying to gain information at that time, our parliamentary questions were being chased from one Ministry to another, day after day, week after week, because nobody had the answers and the information that we were seeking?

Mr. Gummer: On the first question, of course it is true that the Soviets were extremely open once they were found out, but until then, they were as closed as they always are and will be. As far as the hon. Gentleman's second question, I know of no question that——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Gentleman has been found out.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has not been here, but if he had he would know that the only person who has been found out in this debate is his hon. Friend the Member for South Shields who, for the moment, occupies the Opposition Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Stockton, North must accept that any questions put to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were properly answered and every detail announced. We did not miss a single opportunity to try to give the facts as they were at the very moment that we had the chance to do so.

Mr. Frank Cook: That is not so.

Mr. Gummer: I believe that the key issue is that we must take all the measures that are necessary, and more, to protect the British people from any fear that their food was contaminated in any way or would be contaminated in any way. The serious matter before the House is that, in an attempt to score party political points, the hon. Gentleman sold the farmers down the river, frightened people in a wholly unacceptable way, and has shown himself entirely unsuitable to pretend that he should sit on the Opposition Bench in his present capacity.

8.19 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I found the Minister's remarks somewhat hysterical. The way in which he has behaved this evening does his office and his cause considerable harm. I intend, in a calm and calculated manner, to disprove many of the points that he has tried to make. I shall do that coldly and rationally, because that is how to get people to listen, and that is how to achieve results.

I agree with one sentiment that the Minister expressed, which was to the effect that he believed that all necessary steps must be taken to ensure that the British people could feel happy about the public safety and health aspects of the accident. I agree 100 per cent. with that. However, if that is the Minister's belief, and in view of the criticism that has come not only from me, but from many bodies that naturally support him — such as the Country Landowners Association — would it not be better to bring the matter into the open with a full public inquiry which could examine it in detail?

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who had the impertinence to intervene and then disappear, referred to the Soviet Union. The orders that we are discussing, under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985*(a)*, are designed to protect the general public in the event of any future accident like that at Chernobyl. I believe, and I hope to prove this evening, that the Government were found wanting. I am not making a party point; I think that there are lessons to be learnt, which have not been learnt because of the hysterical response that we have just observed.

As the Minister said, this is not an inconsequential order. I rather wish that he had mentioned the order, because it might have been helpful. It is a serious order, revoking eight previous orders relating to this important issue. Now, 17 months after the first of those orders, is an appropriate time to sit back coolly and establish whether there are lessons to be learnt, and whether the position could be improved if—God forbid—there were other emergencies like the one that we faced after Chernobyl.

Let me start from a point of consensus. The Government are, of course, in no way to blame for what

[Dr. David Clark]

happened at Chernobyl; obviously, that was the responsibility of another Government, and the duty of our Government was to protect their own people. I hope, however, to persuade the House that the present Government must accept the blame for the confusion that has emerged in Britain in the aftermath of the accident. We have heard tonight a defensive, almost reactionary, speech from the Minister, full of inconsistencies and inaccuracies. Many of the facts were wrong. Let me give one example. When my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) asked a question about South Yorkshire, the Minister gave the figures for North Yorkshire. I assure the Minister that they are two separate counties.

Mr. Gummer: I clearly said "Yorkshire". That covers the whole of Yorkshire. That is what I said, and *Hansard* will show that I said it.

Dr. Clark: The Minister will never get away with that. The question was about South Yorkshire, and his answer related to North Yorkshire. When he checks the figures with his advisers, he will find that I am correct. There are two cases in north Yorkshire. It was in that area that in 1986, the Government monitored 14 out of nearly 2 million sheep.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): That is plenty.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman says that that is plenty, but I believe that 14 out of 2 million is a pretty low statistical reference on which to base an entire case.

Perhaps I can remind the House of one or two facts —we have not heard many facts tonight. I do not think that even the Minister would disagree with one of them. I know Cumbria, probably slightly better than the Minister does. I was bred there, I started my working life on the land and I have many friends who farm there, and who tell me of the inconsistency and confusion that they have experienced. They have advised me enormously over the past few months, as I have tried to investigate as fully as possible the way in which the Government have operated the scheme.

My thinking is also influenced by the fact that I was living in Cumbria when the greatest nuclear accident prior to Chernobyl occurred, at Windscale in 1957. I well remember the milk being poured down the drains, and the reassurances of the scientists that it was safe there. We now know that there are doubts—I put it as mildly as that—about that advice.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Under the cloak of secrecy.

Dr. Clark: As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) reminds us, the Official Secrets Act imposed a cloak of secrecy.

Let us examine the chronology. It is important to get that right, because it is the substance of my case. The Chernobyl explosion happened early on the morning of 26 April. As we have been reminded by one of the gentlemen of the rent-a-mob gang who have now disappeared, the Swedes were the first to experience the Chernobyl cloud on 28 April. The following day, the cloud was breaking up into various sections, and radioactivity reached western Europe. The Minister did not give the details, but I shall do so. On 29 April, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food started to monitor fresh milk in southern Britain.

On 2 May — the dates are very important — the radioactive plume reached the south-east of the United Kingdom. The Minister's Department requested regular updates from various public bodies — over a dozen of them — to try to work out where the danger could lie. Sampling was extended from milk to vegetation. On 3 May, the plume passed north and west over the United Kingdom. Heavy rain during the passage of the plume on the night of 2 May and part of the next day resulted in high rainfall in parts of the north-west, north Wales, southern Scotland and, as we now know, parts of Yorkshire.

The Minister has reminded us that, on 4 May, his Department established an operations room. It is interesting that, while the Minister was able to get through, my hon. Friends could not. Nevertheless, that operations room was established, and arrangements were made to try to obtain samples for analysis as quickly as possible. Those arrangements included airlifting.

On 5 May, the National Radiological Protection Board confirmed that published derived emergency reference levels, as the Minister calls them, should be established. I hope that the Minister and I agree on all of that, because it is fact.

We now come to more contentious but equally factual issues, leading up to the original orders that were discussed in the House last year — and which, indeed, are consolidated in SI 1893, which is before us this evening.

Following the arrival of the Chernobyl cloud over the United Kingdom, there was considerable public concern and press comment. Anyone who knew anything about radioactivity knew that, sooner or later, there would be a radioactive fallout throughout Europe to a greater or lesser extent. But few people knew the effect of that fallout.

On 6 May, public concern was such that the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), came to the House and made a statement. Quite rightly, the right hon. Gentleman tried to reassure the public. He said:

"the effects of the cloud have already been assessed and that none presents a risk to health in the United Kingdom." —[*Official Report*, 6 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 21.]

The general public and the farming community—so well beloved by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) and his friends — were, naturally, reassured by that. However, the Minister was perhaps a little too hasty in his words of reassurance. Although the Department of the Environment took that line, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was getting together the statistics and making arrangements to co-ordinate the results.

On 5 May, the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology obtained radioactivity readings of caesium on grass of over 26,000 bq/kg in Ennerdale and of over 6,500 bq/kg near Seascale. Both places were later included in the restricted area of Cumbria. The warning bells should have been ringing in the Minister's ears when he saw those figures.

It is also worth making a point about the emergency reference levels to which the Minister referred. The figure of 1,000 bq for radioactive caesium in sheepmeat is internationally accepted. In the past, the Minister has tried to confuse the House by suggesting that 4,000 to 5,000 bq/kg is the appropriate level. His only source for that is the Article 31 Group of European Community advisers who

are in a very small minority. I remind the Minister, too, that he ought to look at the report that was published last week by the National Radiological Protection Board. It suggests that the safety levels that we have been operating in Great Britain are too low and that we need higher safety standards.

If we want the truth about the emergency reference levels, we should turn again to *Hansard*. In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food accurately and concisely how the levels were arrived at. The hon. Lady said:

"Emergency reference levels for sheepmeat in the United Kingdom were agreed by the Government on the advice of the National Radiological Protection Board and were derived from recommendations published by the International Commission on Radiological Protection." — [*Official Report*, 13 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. *335*.]

That was a straightforward answer. The Minister should not try to confuse the general public by referring to an outrageously high level—a figure that even his Government were not prepared to support in the Council of Ministers discussions in Brussels earlier this week.

Mr. Gummer: For the most vulnerable group—babies consuming milk that has possibly been contaminated by radiation—the World Health Organisation has referred to a level of 2,000 bq—a figure twice as high as ours. Sweden and Norway have chosen 1,506 bq. Is it not possible that the hon. Gentleman is slightly over-egging the pudding?

Dr. Clark: It does not become the Minister to belittle his hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Secretary, who answered honestly and openly the questions that were asked. Furthermore, the Minister should not doubt the wisdom of his professional advisers, the National Radiological Protection Board. It ill becomes the Minister to castigate another hon. Member for criticising him when he criticises his own advisers.

On 14 May, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food carried out tests in Cumbria, when at least four sheep were found to be above the safety level of 1,000 bq/kg. One of those sheep had a reading that was in excess of the World Health Organisation figure, to which the Minister has just referred. It had a reading in excess of 2,400 bq/kg. No action had been taken by the Government by 14 May. Even when they were armed with this disturbing evidence, Ministers, amazingly enough, refused to act. We had to wait until 20 June 1986 before the then Minister of Agriculture, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), announced to the House that restrictions on sheep movement were to be imposed in Cumbria.

I emphasised the fact that it took the Government seven weeks to reach a decision. I shall repeat that point, because the Minister obviously does not understand the farming cycle in Cumbria. During those seven weeks a certain amount of sheepmeat, some of which undoubtedly contained high levels of radioactivity, entered the food chain. If he is prepared to listen, I shall explain to the Minister how that happened.

On 20 June, the Minister's restrictions covered most of Cumbria on both the high and low land. His hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) is more aware of that fact than most. Many of the lambs that had been born early in the season in the lowland areas were offered for sale at a local market in that period. I have checked that fact with farmers in Cumbria. They sent early born lambs to market.

I do not make these allegations without having checked the facts. I am not a fool; I realise that the Minister will challenge me if I make general allegations. Therefore, I contacted the Meat and Livestock Commission and took as examples four markets in Cumbria; Carlisle, Kendal, Penrith and Ulverston. Carlisle market takes a number of sheep from Scotland, and I remind the House that parts of Dumfriesshire and Nithsdale are also restricted areas. The Meat and Livestock Commission advised me that at least 24,900 sheep and lambs were offered under the sheep variable premium scheme at those four markets during those seven weeks. They were judged by local farmers to be fat lambs ready for slaughter. Fat lambs were also offered to other local markets.

I have given the figure for those four markets, but I have underestimated the number. There have been other well-documented assertions. The *New Scientist* claims that over 40,000 sheep entered the food chain. I stand by the figures that were given to me today by the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman says that thousands of tonnes of contaminated meat went on sale in Britain, but he has been unable to prove that a single tonne of contaminated meat went on sale in Britain. The reason that he has been unable to do so is because it did not go on sale in Britain.

Dr. Clark: The Minister is getting so worked up that he is not listening to the points that are being put to him. I have quoted the figure of 24,000 bq/kg. He told me that the figure is somewhat in excess of 1,000 bq/kg. I have grossly underestimated the position. The other figures—for example, those in the *New Scientist*—are in excess of my figure. If one adds together those figures, one comes to at least 2,000 tonnes.

Does the Minister believe that the 1,000 farms in Northern Ireland that are now restricted and that were not restricted last year did not have contaminated lambs? Does he believe that the 39 farms in Scotland that are now restricted and that were not restricted last year did not have contaminated lambs? Does he think that those farmers did not send their lambs to market? Of course they did. They are in business to make a profit, and their business is the breeding of lambs.

Mr. Gummer: The farmers did not send those lambs to market, because they were under the size at which they could be sent to market. The hon. Gentleman is taking the contamination levels in one part of the country and applying them to another, thus frightening people by suggesting that they have eaten contaminated lambs. The hon. Gentleman is a disgrace.

Dr. Clark: I apologise if I have upset the Minister, but he does not listen. Those lambs were offered and accepted for sale under the sheep variable premium scheme. They met all the necessary requirements. The Minister keeps on about the size of lambs. His hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border could tell him that we have low land in Cumbria on which sheep can be born early. A number of farmers have told me that they sent lambs from areas that were later restricted. If those areas were restricted on 20 June, is the Minister saying that they were

[Dr. Clark]

not contaminated two weeks or two days before? Of course they were likely to be contaminated, and that is the point that I seek to make.

Mr. Gummer: When lambs that have been contaminated on the high land are taken down to the low land, for some time they are still contaminated. Therefore, the restriction order was put on to ensure that those lambs were not taken to market. The take-up of caesium occurs over a period. We know how long that period is. Therefore, we monitored lamb for that period and the moment there was any possibility of contaminated lamb above 1,000 bq/kg either in size or place, we stopped it going to market. The hon. Gentleman is attempting to mislead the House and the public.

Dr. Clark: I do not need a lessen in elementary sheep breeding in Cumbria. I started my working life on the farms of Cumbria and I know more about that than the Minister. He said that lambs born in the high areas are brought down to the low lands for further fattening. He is right, but they are not brought down in May and June. They are brought down at the back end of the year and later in summer. The lambs that were sent to market were lowland lambs, born in early 1986, that ate grass in an area that was restricted.

The Minister is having great difficulty in appreciating logic, so I shall move on to another topic. It appears that there was considerable confusion between the various Government bodies and Departments. It is quite plain that the Department of the Environment was not sure what the Minister of Agriculture was doing. That is serious, because they were dealing with the Chernobyl accident. We are looking at how we reacted to that disaster so that we can learn from it. Is the Minister convinced that the arrangements that have been in place for the past 20 months are adequate? I appreciate that ear-tagging was later undertaken, but could that not have been done earlier? If we have another disaster, I ask that he should consider ear-tagging at an earlier stage. Twenty-five thousand blue-marked sheep in Cumbria were monitored.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Did the blue paint wash off those sheep? The Minister has not mentioned the Cockermouth market. A senior auctioneer in the county told me today that many fat lambs would have gone through that market. Can my hon. Friend elaborate on that?

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) not only comes from Cumbria but is a food scientist who worked for many in the food industry. He knows a thing or two about the food industry. If the Minister talked to sheep farmers in Cumbria or the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border, I think he would find that that blue paint washed off very quickly.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) was told of those lamb movements by representatives of the NFU in the county. He was told precisely what I was told when I inquired of farmers what was happening. I raised that in the House and it was pooh-poohed by the Government. That is in *Hansard*.

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend the Member for Workington also comes from Cumbria and I think that he knows more about Cumbria than the Minister. A number of farmers told me that the blue paint washed off. I did not raise this previously because I thought it was unfair, but when the blue paint washed off, that resulted in the secondary sale of sheep and in sheep being mixed up. If the Minister checks, he will find that there was slippage and leakage in the system. I will not be more explicit, as I think that the Minister will accept that.

On the basis of the monitoring of 52,000 sheep, the Minister released for slaughter the remainder of the blue-marked sheep on 27 February. However, thousands of other blue-marked sheep were sold outside the designated area in Cumbria. As the Minister told us in his elementary agriculture lesson, there is a pattern of sheep movement. Hill sheep move down to the lusher pastures in the southern counties. Many blue-marked sheep went downstream, so to speak, for fattening.

In southern Cumbria one of the traditional destinations is Staffordshire. Those sheep, after fattening, went to slaughter in 1987. Yet, in a parliamentary answer on 24 November, the Parliamentary Secretary advised that no monitoring of any sheep was undertaken in Staffordshire. As the sheep had come from an area of known risk, would it not have been sensible to have done at least some sample monitoring prior to the slaughtering? I suggest that that is another point that the Minister might like to note as worthy of consideration.

Some of the Cumbrian sheep went to parts of north Yorkshire for fattening, at which time it was thought that the area was free from contamination. Yet we now know that parts of north Yorkshire were affected perhaps as badly as parts of Cumbria. Why was there so little liaison between his Ministry and the Meteorological Office before the *Yorkshire Post* and I drew the report to the Minister's attention?

I hope that the Minister was joking earlier. Is he satisfied that only 14 sheep out of almost 2 million in North Yorkshire is a satisfactory sample to monitor? That is very serious. Is he satisfied that no sheep out of almost 100,000 in south Yorkshire were monitored? Those were high upland areas. The areas in south Yorkshire were peatland and areas of high rainfall where monitoring should have been done 20 months ago. The Minister made the point, rather jokingly, that in Yorkshire a couple of weeks ago only two lambs were found to be over the 1,000 bq/kg limit. If there were only two in November 1987—it was a small sample—I wonder how many we would have found if we had done detailed monitoring at the time of the rain cloud in May 1986. That is the sort of question that has to be answered.

I have a question on the Order Paper asking whether the Minister will undertake spot checks for radioactivity on sheep flocks in the five northern counties of England. By a strange coincidence, the head of branch C of the Ministry's northern regional office in Leeds, which is responsible for civil emergencies, is quoted as saying that a scheme is under way to make random checks,

"and the testing itself began last week."

I understand that press inquiries at the Minister's office evoke only denials of such spot checks taking place.

That is what I mean by confusion between and within Government Departments. Quite simply, the left hand of the Government was and is clearly still unaware of what the right hand is doing. There appears to have been a complete lack of co-ordination. Today the Minister was unaware of the facts that I and my hon. Friend the

Member for Carlisle put to him about the blue-painted sheep in Cumbria. I did not raise that point, for obvious reasons, but the Minister did not know, and I find that incredible.

The key point to emerge from the order and perhaps the cardinal point that came out of the Minister's speech was that we have not learnt the lesson of the events following 26 April 1986. It is essential that if ever there were to be another nuclear accident we should not repeat the mistakes we have made in dealing with the emergency after Chernobyl. That is not only my opinion. Other Government bodies recognise that the operation was far from satisfactory. Dr. Smith of the Meteorological Office, in his famous report, said:

"To some extent Government and the nuclear industry at large within the United Kingdom found themselves somewhat disorganised by the sheer scale of the Chernobyl incident as it affected the United Kingdom."

That is the point that we are trying to make.

I end where I began, by saying that the Minister does himself no good at all with his hysterical outbursts, by his failure to address his mind to the order before us and by the sheer crass ignorance that he shows about sheep farming in Cumbria.

8.54 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): I would like to address my remarks to the position in my constituency. As you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the most recent stories have concerned my constituency.

I should like to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his assurance to my constituents that there never was a danger, there is no danger now and that there will not be a danger in the future. Those who have whipped up the crisis should now tell my constituents that——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you clarify the narrow terms in which the debate is taking place? Am I not correct in saying that it relates to the county of Cumbria?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) has only just started his speech. I have not heard anything out of order yet.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) spoke about sheep moving to North Yorkshire. Therefore, as the hon. Member representing the constituency of Skipton and Ripon, I am taking my cue from him and referring to the matters affecting my constituents.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm in his reply that there never has been a crisis, that there will not be a crisis and that those who have lived off the so-called crisis for the past couple of weeks now have to lay it to rest? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the tests undertaken with great speed by the Ministry after this story appeared in the *Yorkshire Post*—a story to which the hon. Member for South Shields attached himself with great alacrity—showed that only two ewes out of more than 2,000 were found to be above the 1,000 bq/kg level, which is 0·001 per cent? Those two ewes were in a flock of 70. They were all shearlings concentrated on a small patch of moorland in one part of my constituency.

The only even relatively high count found on the grass, heather, lichen, or bilberry that was tested was on heather that came from precisely the same part of the moor. With most sheep now coming off the high ground and beginning to eat feed, it is clear that even those low counts will reduce. I must seriously question whether it is worth continuing with the tests at the same intensive level.

Mr. Gummer: Will my hon. Friend help Opposition Members who said that even one ewe is enough by explaining that no ewes would be sold into the food chain until they had reached the end of their reproductive years and that the two ewes involved were breeding ewes?

Mr. Curry: The entire herd consisted of breeding ewes, and they will continue to be used for breeding. The two ewes found to be over the 1,000 bq/kg level have been slaughtered, so they are not in a position to do any more harm.

There are one or two suggestions that could usefully be retained in case we ever face the same sort of problem again.

Clearly the problem in my constituency arose because of a very localised storm. The Meteorological Office draws up its data from local detail and depends sometimes on amateur observations using rain gauges. I understand from my researches that it takes about seven months to compile local weather data based on this local input and information. The significance of that local storm was not noticed until about February, about nine months after Chernobyl.

The Ministry got the big areas—Scotland, Cumbria and Wales—right, but clearly it would be helpful if some means could be found to lessen the time for the compilation of data of what is necessarily a scattered series of observations.

It would be helpful if we could be certain that the bodies doing the monitoring were reporting to one central point, so that all of the observations are sent to their intended destination. Those are two small management points, but nonetheless they are valid, given the circumstances that prevailed in my constituency.

It was right of the press to bring this matter to our attention. Having done so, and it having been clearly demonstrated that there is no crisis, it is the duty of the press to inform my constituents and their readers that the affair is closed and that there is no reason for concern. When I read the press reports, I went to my constituency. I expected to drive up the A1 and see the southbound carriageway blocked by my constituents, their furniture on roof racks, fleeing the area. However, I found to my great satisfaction that their good sense had prevailed and that farmers were still more concerned about the variable premium than Chernobyl fallout. That is a tribute to the good sense that they and the rest of my constituents showed.

9 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I did not hear the radio broadcast, so I am a little surprised by the heat that has been generated. I speak as a Cumbrian Member who has sheep in his constituency, and it may surprise Cumbrian Members that they are grazing on Rickerby Park.

Those sheep are not affected by the order, but many people in Cumbria are concerned at the way that the Government have tackled the monitoring and control of sheep since the Chernobyl incident in the Ukraine on 26 April 1986. At that time, I was employed as a manager in a large milk factory just outside of my constituency. I was relieved, as were many other people in food industries,

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

when in May the Secretary of State for the Environment said that radiation levels were nowhere near the levels at which there was a hazard to health. That was reassuring, but it turned out to be the first of many misguided statements that were given by Ministers. At best it was a wrong guess; at worst it was a deliberate misstatement to lull people into a false sense of security. It is a sad state of affairs that if, 18 months later, there were a similar accident, the Government would be no better prepared than they were in April 1986.

I shall recap briefly the events after the accident on 26 April. On 2 and 3 May we had severe downpours in parts of northern England, especially the Cumbrian fells and parts of Yorkshire. That rain contained high levels of radiation, especially of caesium, which is a substance that everybody admits has a half-life of 30 years. It was not until 20 June that any sort of order was made stopping sales of sheep. As if that were not bad enough, it was not until 24 June that that order was put into effect in Scotland. I am sure that the Chernobyl fallout did not recognise Hadrian's wall and that some sheep went to market in Scotland after the ban had been imposed in Cumbria, which demonstrates the inconsistency of the Government.

On 20 June, a statement was made by the right hon. Member for Westmoreland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who was then the Minister of Agriculture, and a Cumbrian Member. It says:

"These present a satisfactory picture overall and there is no reason for anyone to be concerned about the safety of food in the shops."—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 1333.]

The implication of the press statement was that this was a short-term problem that would go away; that although radio-caesium had a half-life of 30 years in adult animals, half-life is estimated at between 30 and 100 days, but that in lamb it would be shorter—between 25 and 50 days.

People reading that would be happy to assume that this was a small problem that would go away. It reminds me of the statements that were made by politicians and generals at the outbreak of the first world war—"It will all be over by Christmas." We all know that the first world war went on until 1918. Some 18 months later, I bet that no Minister is prepared to tell us when the ban will be lifted from Cumbria. I hope that the Minister of State mentions this point.

Today, I asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether is was likely that the ban would be lifted within the next 12 months. He said no. It appears that the problems resulting from Chernobyl could last longer than those resulting from the first world war. There are still 75,000 sheep in Cumbria affected by the order. One might have thought that the number would decrease, but it will increase to 150,000 sheep on 150 farms next spring after the lambing season.

Becquerel levels in the county are still high. As late as last July, 4,000 bq/kg were found in a sample. I understand that the failure rate on the affected earth is still 5 per cent. and that often the sheep that fail have 2,000 or 3,000 bq/kg. If the statements about the time scale of the problem were wrong, one could easily believe that the statements about the safety of the food in shops were wrong. If the Government can be wrong on one, I am sure that they can be wrong on another. Can we really believe that no affected animals were put on the market?

If the Minister is so sure, why has he not been able to produce the figures? Why can he not say that the authorities tested the sheep that went through the Carlisle market and found them below the stated level? The right hon. Gentleman cannot say that, because the authorities failed in their duty to test those sheep. If that obvious step had been taken, we would not have had to have this debate. We would have known for certain that the authorities failed to protect the public. I believe that some of the lambs that passed through the market should not have done so. The delay between early May and 20 June was a disastrous decision, taken by an unprepared Government.

I have come to the Chamber not to destroy the confidence of the people of Cumbria but to restore it. If confidence is not restored, the county will suffer. Our farmers must be well compensated for the loss not only of lambs but of land values. We must ensure that the restrictions are severe and that anyone who breaks the rules is caught. I am not sure whether there are people in place who can find out whether the rules are broken. I am not sure whether there have been any prosecutions, but I do not want to go into that. We must restore confidence at the international level.

The effect on milk has been mentioned, I think twice. The position in Cumbria following the Chernobyl incident was difficult. Many organisations that exported goods lost major orders in the traditional markets of Asia, Africa and South America. The becquerel levels imposed by those countries were much lower than those imposed by Britain and the position was not helped by our friends in Australia and New Zealand who went around saying, "You do not want to buy any milk from northern Europe because it is full of radiation."

Milk with high becquerel levels, although below the legal minimum, was transported from exporting factories to the home trade, to the doorstep, to ensure that milk with low becquerel levels went to the export market. That is not something that we should be pleased about, and we must be ready for that——

Mr. Gummer: Is the hon. Gentleman alleging that milk with dangerous becquerel levels was sold on the British market?

Mr. Martlew: The Minister was obviously not listening. I said that the milk fell within the legal limits; I am sure that when the Minister reads *Hansard* he will see that.

Mr. Gummer: I am not trying to catch the hon. Gentleman out, but he must remember that everything that he says is listened to outside. I want him to confirm that no milk was sold in this country that would be dangerous to someone who drank it.

Mr. Martlew: I was saying that milk containing safe becquerel levels — but which would not be accepted abroad because safety standards are different — was transferred from factories here and sent into the home trade, while milk with low becquerel levels was brought into the exporting factories to go abroad. I am not saying that at any time we sold milk containing becquerel levels above those laid down by the Government.

My next point goes beyond this debate. We must restore people's confidence in the safety of our nuclear

industry. We have a nuclear industry and we must ensure that next time there is an accident it does not involve a British reactor. Confidence has been so badly dented by the Government's handling of the aftermath of Chernobyl —no one suggests that the Government are to blame for the accident—that the only way to restore confidence is by setting up a public inquiry. It would be simple for the Minister to say, "We should have a public inquiry to sort out what is true and what is rumour." That inquiry should not only examine the actions of agencies, Government Departments and environmental groups; it should provide a code of conduct setting out exactly what needs to be done if such an accident happens again. We need a plan for the future. The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) implied that there were lessons to be learned, and I am not sure that the Minister has learnt those lessons.

There are very few sheep in my constituency. However, like many other hon. Members, I represent many people who make their living out of producing food products. We must ensure that the general public are confident that the food produced in our factories is safe to eat. That is why I again ask the Minister to set up a public inquiry.

9.12 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), with whose remarks I should like to associate myself, I wish to refer to Yorkshire. I do so in the full confidence that the order refers to restrictions throughout the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) called for a public inquiry. The difficulty with any kind of inquiry is that it would reflect what has happened during the past week since the story appeared that, unbeknown to everyone, levels of caesium that could conceivably have been dangerous to human health had been discovered in Yorkshire. We are faced with a dilemma, because the more the Government and other agencies attempt to reassure people by providing information and carrying out inquiries and tests, the more people inevitably feel that there is a problem.

The test levels in this country are very conservative. It has been said that, if someone ate sheepmeat containing the levels of caesium to be found in Cumbria—I agree that we should certainly take precautions and monitor the movements of those sheep—the level of radioactivity that he would ingest would be similar to what he would experience if he went for a chest X-ray. It is right that, when such tests are carried out, there should be trigger levels which show when a level is above normal. However, it does not automatically mean that, because there is an abnormal level of radiation, there is a real danger to health.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will reassure both the House and those outside that the levels in Cumbria are considerably higher than those in other parts of the country, such as West and North Yorkshire.

Because the information is inevitably technical, there is a great deal of scope for misunderstanding. Indeed, constituents have sent me, through the post, potatoes and carrots that they have dug from their gardens which they think might be contaminated. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend reassured everyone by confirming that no restrictions have been put upon vegetables in Cumbria, and that such restrictions have never been necessary. Indeed, the arguments for restrictions anywhere else in the country, including my constituency, are even less potent. I am glad to see my right hon. Friend nodding.

It is clear that panic stories will always be more newsworthy than stories that might offer reassurance. My constituents, like those of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon, have been level-headed about the whole affair. There are lessons to be learned, and I hope that we will learn them. There is no doubt that the Meteorological Office did not pick up the heavy rainfall in parts of Yorkshire. However, it should not be assumed that, therefore, there are dangers to health.

I hope that this debate will show people that they do not need to worry, that the level-headed attitude of my constituents is justified, and that indeed, it would have been wrong for restrictions to be imposed in other parts of the country in the way that they have been imposed in Cumbria.

9.17 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Last week we were privileged to debate the Scottish and Welsh orders. I was not surprised when hon. Members on both sides of the House united to support the Government and the orders. We are duty bound tonight —with respect to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—to support the Government. It is a very serious problem.

I am a small hill farmer and have lived in Wales all my life. I understand the problems that have faced Welsh farmers. There are similar problems in the north of England and in Scotland. We owe a great deal to the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and to the scientists who were involved last year. We must realise that the problem — something that we had never previously experienced—came very suddenly. Everyone involved at the time did their very best.

I am aware that a few mistakes were made, understandably, on both sides. Of course, we could be critical of everyone involved, but I believe that, these few months later, we should in fact be paying tribute to the many people involved after the Chernobyl disaster.

I do not agree with what the hon. Member for South Shields said tonight. I am not interested in the telex or in what happened between the Minister and the hon. Gentleman. We have a serious problem on our hands. I have been asked many times by my constituents and others how long the restrictions will remain in force. Will it be 12 months, three years or five years? Some have suggested that it could be 100 years before the restrictions are lifted. Those are the questions in which the public are interested.

We are also interested in compensation. The majority of farmers have accepted the compensation that was paid to them, but it is more than likely that, for the first few months after the disaster, farmers who suffered were not adequately compensated. I hope that, when he replies to the debate, the Minister will assure the House that he will consider giving them better compensation.

Today and last week, I have listened to hon. Members talking about the lamb trade. I have been selling a few lambs lately, and this year the lamb trade is more buoyant than ever. It is improving every week. I have evidence of that from selling my own lambs.

Now and again, many of us who wear political hats of different shades say things that upset that trade. All of us who have said things that we should not have said about

[Mr. Geraint Howells]

the Chernobyl disaster should think twice. The hon. Member for South Shields and other Labour Members may disagree with the Minister about trivial matters, but they should remember that there are more important things in life. We are duty bound to look after the sheep industry and the consumers. I beg Labour Members to reconsider what they plan to do later this evening. Let us support the Government on this occasion and ensure that the orders are carried through, to the benefit of everyone involved.

9.22 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) spoke with great generosity. I am grateful to him, because at the time of the Chernobyl incident I was serving in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as the special adviser to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). The attack that has been launched by the Opposition is an attack on the competence or diligence of the scientists and officials who serve the Ministry, and I regret it. It is misconceived, and I am grateful for the opportunity to add my voice to resisting it.

I was interested in the figures given by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). It is always difficult to appraise figures given during a debate, but the 24,000 lambs that he mentioned could not have represented more than a small fraction of 1 per cent. of the total United Kingdom throughput of lamb. Indeed, it would be highly implausible if they did. To put it more vividly, the hon. Gentleman spoke about thousands of tonnes of lamb being contaminated. Even if we took the charitable interpretation—that only 1,000 tonnes of lamb had been contaminated — spread over 24,000 lambs, it would mean an average carcase weight of 40 kg per lamb. Of course, if it was more than 10,000 tonnes, there would be an average carcase weight of 400 kg per lamb. In neither case could the lambs have qualified for certification under the sheep variable premium.

The Opposition are engaged — we have seen earlier signs of it, but it has now come to a head—in pursuit of what I call a pastoral fantasy, or Marie Antoinette politics, in which there should be one dosimeter to every sheep in the country and one radiac meter stationed in every field, no living thing can have a single becquerel in it, and there must be a public inquiry every month. If Opposition Members found themselves in the Garden of Eden, they would immediately demand a recount. However, these are serious matters and I want briefly to leave some thoughts with my right hon. Friend for him to answer tonight or later.

My first point concerns the ingestion of foliage by sheep and the eating of those sheep by humans at the end of the food chain, which means that radioactive material goes into the body and forms part of the digestive tract. That is different from an application of radiation from an external source such as an X-ray. I am satisfied that the effect is slight, but I want the Minister's reassurance, as there have been recent recommendations of a reduction in exposure to radiation in general.

Secondly, I want the Minister to say something about the current research into the expansion of the nationwide coverage of radiation monitoring by local district authorities. What steps can be taken, and how far has knowledge been expanded on the issue, to eliminate caesium in the peat and foliage that is eaten by hill sheep, so that their exposure can be reduced?

Will my right hon. Friend say something about the European situation? I well remember playing a part in the European draft orders, and I want to know that the Minister is still maintaining the British position on the basis of scientific and objective evidence rather than some politically driven alternative.

Farmers have not featured much in the debate, but will my right hon. Friend say something about farmers who are still in this position? Although not from the same part of the country, I am a farmer and I can well imagine the distress and inconvenience that they have felt, which is not helped by the promulgation of scare stories. I want an assurance that there will be continuing support for farmers for as long as it takes to work out the problem.

Any Government faced with an unprecedented problem such as this have two duties: to be vigilant, and not to be alarmist. The Government have discharged those reasonably. No country was better prepared to handle the problem, and no country in Europe handled it better.

9.28 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) set out to justify advice that he gave Ministers a year and a half ago. Our view is that the advice that he gave them at that time was wrong.

Mr. Boswell: On a point of clarification, the hon. Gentleman knows that I am not a scientist and I certainly would not have presumed to give technical advice to Ministers; nor would it have been proper for me to refer in the Chamber to advice that I might have given Ministers on that or any other occasion.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman referred to himself as a special adviser to Ministers, from which I perhaps drew the wrong conclusions.

I want to draw attention to two areas in which the Government have been negligent. The first arises from the time that elapsed following the incident that took place at 1.24 am on Saturday 26 April 1986, when the explosion took place at Chernobyl. On 28 April, the Swedes were carrying out routine environmental monitoring following the triggering of high levels of radiation. They at once advised many of their farmers to take immediate action. The information held by the Swedes was communicated to most of western Europe. There are Ministers on the Front Bench who know that that information was made available to the British Government that weekend.

No farmer in Cumbria in the areas that were subsequently to be restricted was ever advised about action to remove his lambs from the fells. No action was taken in the United Kingdom on Monday or on Tuesday, although by that time the radioactive plume was being carried across Europe. I understand that on Tuesday evening the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food started the sampling of fresh milk in the southern counties of Britain. Farmers in Cumbria were still not being told to remove their lambs from the fells or not to take them to market.

On Wednesday and Thursday there was still no advice to farmers in Cumbria. By Friday the radioactive plume

had reached the south-east of England and the Ministry requested regular updates from the Meteorological Office on the plume's trajectory and on rainfall data. By that time sampling had been extended to cover vegetation, but still no action was taken relative to sheep farmers in Cumbria. I presume that by that time experts would have known that there would be damage to the fells, to the higher parts of Wales, to the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and to parts of England—certainly to the Lake District.

On the Saturday afternoon I was in my garden. In effect it is on the side of a fell, because I live at the bottom of Laterigg in the Lake District. It was a warm day with fairly heavy rainfall. That can be checked. That was Chernobyl rain that was falling, but no one had been alerted and there were no warnings. That was a week after the Chernobyl disaster but farmers in the county had still not been warned, and it was only on the following day that it was suggested that there might well have been some rainfall in the county that had implications for farming on the fells. There was no action for a further month.

Questions were asked in Parliament, and that brings me to the second point of negligence that I lay at the Government's door. Farmers became worried about whether they would be compensated. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North is a farmer. Does he remember farmers asking him at that time whether they would ever be compensated? Sheep farmers are the lowest paid farmers in the United Kingdom. Hill farmers in the Lake District are certainly badly paid.

During that time, lamb was finding its way to the market. Nearly seven weeks later, on 20 June, a Minister announced to the Commons that the Government would be prepared to consider compensation. He did not say that the Government would pay compensation, but that they would consider it. That further aggravated the insecurity in farming communities, certainly in the county of Cumbria, about whether any compensation would be paid. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) shakes his head. Does he deny that during that month he was called to a meeting and asked about the principle of compensation? Does he deny that worries over compensation by farmers in my constituency were expressed to him? He could nod to the Minister and the Minister could come to the Dispatch Box and deny it for him.

In the second half of July, I was asked to come to a meeting of fell farmers in my constituency. I think it was in a farm house in the Newlands valley in the fells. A number of fell farmers turned up, and the conversation that went on for about one and a half hours was only about whether they would be compensated and the form that that compensation might take. Indeed, the farmers repeatedly referred to bankruptcy and what would happen to their livelihoods. People at the meeting spoke about giving up farming because they had not received assurances that they would be compensated.

I was given a document at that meeting and a week later had an appointment with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his Whitehall office. I made representations about the case put to me during that meeting with the farmers. It was not until a few days later that a further statement was made which, to some extent, gave the farmers some satisfaction. Even so, the farmers expressed their concern throughout August.

I believe that in the first week after the Chernobyl incident, Cumbrian farmers should have been alerted and they should have been advised to remove their stock from the fells which were to become contaminated because other farmers were advised to take such action in other parts of western Europe. I also believe that the principle of compensation should have been established from day one.

On 19 March I asked:

"Will the Minister give an undertaking that no hill farm producer of lamb whose farm has been subject to contamination as a result of the Chernobyl incident will lose money?"—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 1025.]

The Minister should not have equivocated and turned his reply into one of his cynical little jokes or a hysterical speech about the need for me to admit that farmers were getting a better deal in the United Kingdom. He should have given me an undertaking that farmers would be fully compensated for every loss, so that farmers' minds could have been put at ease.

I raised those questions a week and a half after the incident took place. I have been asking those questions for a long time and that is why farmers are concerned in Cumbria and why, at the end of the day, lamb leaked on to the market in the way described by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark).

9.36 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): This is the third debate that we have had in as many weeks dealing with the consequences of Chernobyl. I particularly want to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for his glowing testimony. It warmed the cockles of my heart. He described his reminiscences of the exact sequence of events.

It is important for hon. Members to realise that we all bring individual points of view to bear on this subject. In many ways the debate has been overshadowed by a remarkable contribution from the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who opened the debate and who will reply. His contribution was remarkable and I hope that in retrospect he will appreciate that it was not a fitting contribution. He dwelt at great length, and with unusually colourful language, even for him, on details about the radio interview that he had this morning with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). He also referred to a telex, the parentage of which I gather he disputes. More of the radio interview and the telex later; I want to make one or two points first.

The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), as I understand it, said that he had been a special adviser to the Minister in his previous incarnation. He subsequently denied that when challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington.

Mr. Boswell: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the normal understanding of the role of a special adviser, and the position that I filled, is one who advises on political, not scientific, matters? The substance of this was essentially a scientific judgment.

Mr. Frank Cook: What does that mean?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) wants to know what that means, and so do I. "The Times Guide to the House of Commons"

[Mr. Davies]

account, which is no doubt based on information provided by the hon. Gentleman, refers to him as a farmer and a special adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food between 1984 and 1986. I suggest that if the hon. Gentleman wishes to challenge the accuracy of that, he should take it up with the editors of that book. He acknowledges that he was a special adviser. I respectfully suggest that he should now recognise that he is no longer a special adviser; he is merely a politician like the rest of us, and, as a politician, he has to make political judgments. It does no good for him to leap to the defence of his erstwhile colleagues by saying that we are being unkind to civil servants. We are not being unkind to civil servants; we are exercising a political choice and engaging in a political debate with the Minister of State because there are points of substance on which we differ.

At the heart of our case lies the question of the competence of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food particularly the relationship which exists between that Ministry and other Government Departments. I understand the concern of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), because my hon. Friends and I do not want to do anything to destroy the confidence of consumers or producers. The hon. Gentleman will understand that we have been careful about the language that we have used in this debate and in previous debates as we do not wish to upset that confidence.

The essence of the Minister's contribution was that he made assertions. He said on three occasions that there were no contaminated lambs offered to market. That statement was an assertion and was the basis of the Minister's case. How on earth can the Minister possibly make that assertion? How can he say that there were no contaminated lambs offered to market? If he can come to the Dispatch Box and say that he and his Department monitored every lamb that went to market, and every lamb was below the action levels, we would accept that his assertion was based on some evidence. However, it has no justification, and the Minister is merely making a bold assertion.

I remind the Minister and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North that the scheme is a voluntary one. It is not compulsory. The success of the scheme depends on the willingness of sheep producers to ring the Ministry and ask it to conduct examinations and monitor the lambs which they propose to sell. If I were to say to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North that that offers the opportunity for abuse, he will know what I mean.

Mr. Geraint Howells: No.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman reflects and has some discussion with his colleagues further north in the Principality, he will realise what I mean.

Mr. Howells: No.

Mr. Davies: The Minister will know from contact with his advisers that, to say the least, he was ill-advised in saying that no contaminated lambs have gone to market.

We should acknowledge the central role that MAFF has played in the events of the past 18 months. The Minister would have us believe that it was of no consequence because the number of lambs involved was so small and the action level of radioactivity was so slight that it did not really matter so long as one did not eat lamb every day for a year. He was so satisfied with the safeguards that he was encouraging his pregnant wife to eat lamb. That was unwise of the Minister, because the order sets out penalties for those who breach the regulations. I think that the Minister will be well advised to respond to some particular questions. If he wishes to engage in frolics with his hon. Friend, I suggest he does it at a later stage.

The order that we are debating — against which Opposition Members will vote this evening—lays down the penalties — an unlimited fine or up to two years' imprisonment — for anyone who does not comply with the regulations. In the light of that, the Minister would be well advised to recognise the importance of the issue. I wish to put three points to him. The first I will refer to as the Yorkshire case. The essence of the Government's response to the recent discovery of a hot spot in Yorkshire was that they dismissed it as a matter of no consequence because they had it all under control anyway. Apparently a small patch of heather moorland had been burnt and therefore had more than usually acidic soils which released the radio-caesium into the cycle.

The Minister must tell the House why it was that not until subsequent questioning of the Meteorological Office gave an indication of the exceptionally heavy rainfall that his Department took an interest in the events in Yorkshire and in the discovery of the hot spot. It is fair to ask the Minister what discussions he had with the Meteorological Office during the period of heavy rain following Chernobyl which brought the radioactive cloud to Britain and washed it down into the earth. I think that we are entitled to know the relationship between MAFF and the Meteorological Office or, more properly, its sponsoring Department, the Ministry of Defence.

I have mentioned the Ministry of Defence. Can the Minister tell the House the role played by other Government Departments? As I understand it, the Department of the Environment has a responsibility. Certainly the Department of Trade and Industry has a responsibility. Certainly the Department of Health and Social Security has an involvement. So, too, does the Department of Energy. The Home Office has an involvement. In the case of Scotland and Wales, their Home Departments have a responsibility.

Yet the Minister would have us believe that, despite all the resources, all the scientific advice and all the staff that these Departments of State had, it required my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields, in an interview with the *Yorkshire Post*, to bring it to his attention. That is the worst example of reactive government—waiting until a problem is drawn to their attention. Then the Minister gave us an overreaction.

As to the telex, I had a brief discussion with the Minister behind your Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He has now acknowledged the existence of the radiochemical inspectorate. I understand that he denied its existence in an earlier exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields.

Mention has been made of the telex, and I think it is worth commenting on it. The telex is addressed to the chief scientist of the radio-chemical inspectorate. That inspectorate, established by legislation in 1960, is required

to table annual reports to Parliament. The chief scientist of the radio-chemical inspectorate received the telex on 5 May. It says:

"We have reliable information indicating the following as of 5 May 1986."

The telex refers to alpha emitters having been detected at not insignificant levels.

So we note that as early as 5 May 1986 the Government were aware of that. That is being charitable to the Minister and assumes that all the other Departments of State, with all their resources, had not identified the problem. But we know that the Department of the Environment was informed on 5 May because concern was being expressed to the Government's chief scientist in the radio-chemical inspectorate. Yet seven weeks elapsed before the Government took action.

There may be a dispute between the Minister and my hon. Friend about the size of lambs which went to market. There is no doubt that on the figures produced and submitted to the House by the Meat and Livestock Commission, about 25,000 fat lambs were taken to market for slaughter and were introduced into the food chain during that seven-week period, yet the public were denied the protection that they should have been given by the Minister.

Whatever else the Minister does or does not answer, I hope that he will acknowledge the existence of the radio-chemical inspectorate and that he will refer to the fact that it is the responsibility of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Therein lies the heart of the Minister's problem. He has to have discussions with other Departments of State. The attitude of the Department of the Environment was summed up earlier this year, and in 1986, in statements by two of his hon. Friends following the Chernobyl incident. The first was on 9 May, when the Minister of State said:

"The problems from radiation would diminish almost completely over the next few days."

He asserted 18 months ago, that the problem would diminish in a few days.

Four days later, the Secretary of State for the Environment went one better. On 13 May, he said:

"As long as there are no further discharges from Chernobyl, the incident may be regarded as over for this country by the end of the week".—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 569.]

Eighteen months ago, the Secretary of State for the Environment gave an assurance to the House that the matter would be over in a few weeks, in full knowledge of the fact that contaminated meat was getting into the food chain.

The substance of the Minister's argument this evening has been that the 1,000 bq/kg level is an action level. He said that he would take action as soon as any food was contaminated above that level. That comes a bit odd from a Minister whose colleague, three weeks ago, was trying to persuade us that the 1,000 bq/kg level was much too low. He tried to persuade the House that we should have a 5,000 bq/kg level. We are entitled to some consistency from the Minister of State.

Mr. Gummer: Come on.

Mr. Davies: I understand the Minister's concern, but he took an extraordinary length of time to develop his argument. Let me draw his attention to an article which appeared in *The Guardian* on 19 November. It said:

"Workers exposed to radiation have been warned that new evidence shows that they are twice or three times as likely to develop fatal cancers than was previously thought."

That warning came from the National Radiological Protection Board.

Given the wealth of evidence about the increasing understanding of the problems of radioactivity and the increasing concern about the problems of contamination, I hope that the Minister will realise that the level of communication between his officials and other Government Departments is inadequate. He is asking the House to support the order. To get that support, the Minister has to prove his case. He has not done so, and we shall vote against the order.

9.53 pm

Mr. Gummer: With the leave of the House, I should like to try to reply to the debate. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has made the serious allegation that fat lambs which were seriously contaminated got into the food chain without the protection that the Government claimed to provide. In that sense, he is warning people that they may have been endangered by what happened. They were not endangered. Under this measure, the Government will continue to ensure that they are never endangered.

At the beginning of the debate, I challenged the hon. Member for South Shields to deny that this morning he had clearly misled the nation by saying:

"Certainly I think the general population was probably basically all right, but for the 'at risk' group it's very worrying —pregnant people, young children etc."

He suggested on the radio that young people and pregnant women who ate lamb should be worried. That is wholly untrue and he knows it. It is an outrageous slur and the fact that he could not reply to it shows both his own bankruptcy and the outrageous way in which he behaved his morning.

Dr. David Clark: The Minister made some serious allegations, but there is one simple way to prove or disprove the matter. As the Minister and the House know, every person who is in possession of a sheep has to keep a sheep movement book. Why does the Minister not call in every sheep movement book in existence? Conservative Members may frown, but it is on this basis that we get our subsidies. I challenge the Minister to investigate every sheep movement book and then we can look at them publicly and see exactly where all the sheep movements in Cumbria were. As has been said, that would prove it once and for all.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for South Shields said that thousands of tonnes of contaminated sheepmeat got into the food chain. He knows that that is untrue. He cannot prove it and he is now flapping about trying to find some answer for the — I use the words advisedly — disgraceful behaviour of his hon. Friends and himself in the House and this morning on radio.

The hon. Member for South Shields is trying to make so much fuss because he knows he has let the farmers down, he has let his party down and he has denied what his predecessor, the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), said the whole time. It is within the House's memory that the hon. Member for Pontypridd was most careful to follow the advice of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells).

We all agreed that we would tell the truth directly and give the figures as quickly as we could, but on no occasion

[Mr. Gummer]

would we seek to use the natural fears of the people for party political purposes. The hon. Member for Pontypridd held loyally and decently to that. The hon. Member for South Shields has let himself down on this occasion. The House knows it, and no amount of baa-ing from the Opposition Benches will cover up that fact.

The hon. Member for South Shields said that he had a telex in his hand that came from the chief scientist of the radiochemical institute. It turned out that that telex was sent to the chief scientist of the radiochemical inspectorate. That is what happened. The hon. Gentleman said the opposite—I have the transcript before me—and the hon. Gentleman was wrong. That telex came from an organisation that advises those local authorities that are opposed to nuclear power. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]

The hon. Member for South Shields said that we have the highest action level in Europe. However, he failed to mention that the only two other countries in Europe that have problems with meat are Sweden, which has an action level of 1,500 bq/kg—500 bq/kg higher than ours—and Norway, which has an action level of 6,000 bq/kg.

The hon. Member for South Shields has sought to use false facts and a serious misstatement about the telex to try to lead people astray and to frighten them. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made that clear and he was right to do so.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) that his constituents are quite right not to be worried about any radiation that occurred in that area from the Chernobyl disaster. My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) is correct to say that it is the duty of the press to report all that has been said in this debate——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Get the books in.

Mr. Gummer: The scare stories that have been spread by Opposition Members are totally false.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I have only two minutes to go.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) cast a considerable slur on my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). At no time was he told by his farmers that they were trying to avoid the system. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman for Workington must accept that that is also a terrible slur on British farmers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let the record show that I never said what the Minister has attributed to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Workington——

Mr. Frank Cook *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I will not give way, as I only have a minute to go. The hon. Member for Workington showed the close attention that he pays to sheep rearing when he suggested——

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister has informed the House that he has only one minute to go. Will you tell the House whether that is an accurate statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate can go on until 11.30 pm, but I get the distinct impression that both sides of the House want to come to a fairly quick conclusion.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) also suggested that the farmers of Cumbria should have been warned that they should take their sheep from the fells. I wonder what the hon. Gentleman thought that they would do with those thousands of sheep. Perhaps they could have put them in the garden where the hon. Gentleman was at the time. What point is there in warning farmers to do something that they could not possibly do, and which would do no good anyway?

The hon. Member for Workington asked about compensation. I merely refer him to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North, who feels that the compensation arrangements were, in general, suitable and proper in the circumstances. However, we shall certainly look at any particular cases that the hon. Gentleman raises.

The truth is that Opposition Members have to shout from a seated position, because they know perfectly well that they have been caught out in scaremongering, dangerous talk, attacking the farmers and the people of Britain. The hon. Member for South Shields has not had the courtesy to apologise to the House, the farmers and the nation.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 219, Noes 135.

Division No. 83] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus

Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (England) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1893), dated 5th November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th November, be approved.

Sleeper Services (East Coast)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the proposed withdrawal of east coast sleeper services by British Rail. I understand the difficulty that the Government are in, because there are well-established rules governing relations between Government Departments and British Rail, as it is a commercial organisation. It is an important subject and, because it also affects Berwick-upon-Tweed, my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has indicated that he would like to speak and the Minister has indicated that he is not averse to that.

I recognise that the Government have little role to play in the day-to-day management of British Rail. It is the management of British Rail that should shoulder managerial responsibility for decisions that are made. I also recognise that steps have to be taken to minimise financial losses. Profitability is rightly a major concern. However, having said that, I do not believe that the Government should be totally disinterested in or detached from the policies of British Rail and, in particular, its proposal to withdraw passenger sleeper services from Berwick-upon-Tweed down the east coast to King's Cross in London.

I and others, including my eminent constituent the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), feel that the Government have a residual responsibility to consider the coherence of the rail network as a whole. I am certainly persuaded that the proposed change affects the network as a whole and I therefore argue that the Government should take a direct and keen interest in the change in services planned to be introduced in May next year.

The profit motive cannot be allowed to override all other considerations. The national rail network cannot be reduced only to those routes that make profits on a clinical cost-benefit analysis. I submit that a rail network is a sophisticated and complex organisation whose contribution to the social well-being of our community cannot be reduced merely to accountants' profit and loss statements. The Government have a duty to satisfy themselves that the structure of British Rail's organisation is sensible, that the responsibility between departments within British Rail is appropriate, and that the yardsticks adopted for assessing profitability and levels of service are compatible with the Department of Transport's strategic transport plans.

The way in which the InterCity division of British Rail is calculating the returns from existing services is seriously flawed and can be said to be short-sighted. The proposed withdrawal is rightly and vigorously opposed by public opinion across a wide spectrum of views. If the Government were not aware of the extent of the opposition to the proposal, I hope that the debate will remedy that. I should tell the Minister that the problem does not just stop at Edinburgh. There is widespread apprehension forth of Edinburgh in a northerly direction that the east coast service to Aberdeen is called into some question by the consequences of the proposal that we are discussing.

I have received extensive and sustained adverse reaction across a wide spectrum of local public opinion: from representative bodies such as local authorities, community councils, the local National Farmers Union and other business organisations, as well as from travellers and individuals simply concerned about the proposed plans. In case the Minister does not know, I should tell him that there is an emotional and psychological aspect to the public opinion that I recognise and share. The closure of the Waverley route in the Borders region in Scotland caused immense traumatic damage locally. The effects of that withdrawal are still felt and the fear of any future rail withdrawals or closures resurrects the unhappy memories of the withdrawal of that route.

The proposal is viewed locally as another potential blow to the perceived economic importance of the area. It will have a profoundly depressing effect on business and commerce in the whole area and, whether it recognises the fact or not, British Rail is downgrading the economic status of the locality by virtue of its proposal. That is a matter of real regret and concern.

It is not that alternatives have not been put forward. British Rail and InterCity's analysis of the present situation has been questioned realistically, sensibly and seriously. The financial vability of the existing routes could be considerably improved by a combination of a better service and improved marketing. Does it make sense to electrify the east coast route and then close large parts of it down overnight for passenger services? Those are important questions that remain substantially unanswered.

I hope that the Minister can tell the House that this matter will be kept under review by his Department. I hope that he can allay fears that I have heard expressed recently that British Rail may even adopt the "feeder train" argument, if I may put it that way, to justify future reductions in daytime passenger InterCity services. That would make all London-bound passengers travel from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Newcastle or Edinburgh before boarding a non-stop or limited stop express InterCity train to King's Cross. That would be the beginning of the end of Berwick-upon-Tweed as a viable railway station. Berwick-upon-Tweed is crucial to the needs of my constituents and to the economy of the north-east. If sleeper services are withdrawn, it will be another significant nail in the coffin of the economic prospects and future of the region.

10.19 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and the Minister for allowing me to take part in the debate and I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the subject. The presence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), many more of my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and others demonstrates the strong feeling that is aroused in the House and along the east coast line about this outrageous proposal, which affects areas to the north of my constituency and many to the south, including Tyneside and Teesside, whose only access to a sleeper is via Newcastle.

It is not only sleepers but the overnight service, including nightrider trains, which have been popular with

students, young people and service men, that are affected. It is an extraordinary example of bogus accounting. The alleged savings are from one sector at the expense of another. The track is still there; it still has to be maintained and traffic will travel over it, unless British Rail has decided to lose all freight traffic. Apparently, the parcels division is in the process of losing the newspaper contracts. Seriously misleading accounting is leading British Rail to claim that it can make savings by abandoning the service altogether. On the contrary, it will lose, as some of its representatives have admitted in dicussions with hon. Members, a substantial amount of traffic to the airlines and coaches and it will fail to meet the needs of many of its customers.

What has characterised the service on the east coast line, particularly the sleeper service, has been the complete failure in marketing. I do not accept that the service cannot be run as a significant and valuable contributor to the effectiveness of InterCity, but it cannot be done without sensible marketing. That has been done in Edinburgh, where an attractive service is being provided. It is being expanded with the provision of lounge cars, but none of this has been done in Tyneside. I have seen no marketing of any description of the sleeper services from Berwick-upon-Tweed southwards.

Marketing also extends to fares. Business men can obtain an executive ticket on a sleeper from Edinburgh for £108. The same journey from Newcastle or Alnmouth will cost £130 for a return journey that is 200 miles shorter. That demonstrates that not even the slightest attempt has been made to market the service. Customers have been driven away systematically.

For two months after a timetable change two years ago, British Rail refused to take bookings for the sleeper service north of Newcastle because it did not believe that it was still running, so one had to book to Edinburgh to get on the train there. It is ironic that somebody who is described as a marketing manager in British Rail has been telling hon. Members that the service is running at a loss.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I did not want to interrupt the Adjournment debate, but I shall be brief. Is it not ironic that the same taxpayers—our constituents—will be deprived of this lifeline at a time of the year when flying is difficult and driving dangerous? Those same constituents must subsidise British Rail investment in the south-east for yuppie commuter services of £300 million per year.

Mr. Beith: That is why, when it is withdrawing services, British Rail cannot expect hon. Members from the north and Scotland to support what it is doing in the south-east. It has produced a succession of excuses. It has changed the arguments that it uses to defend this decision. At every meeting that I have attended it has produced a different set of arguments and it has refused to consider compromises and alternatives designed to meet its desire to shift traffic at night from the east coast route.

Different proposals have been put forward. I know that a northern group of Labour Members of Parliament has suggested an Edinburgh-Newcastle service via Carlisle down to Euston. I have proposed that BR should run a service via Birmingham, enabling some passengers to alight there on the way to Euston. It has refused these compromise suggestions and operated with a closed mind.

It is clear from the debate and the interest of hon. Members that we are not prepared to tolerate that closed-mind attitude and will fight until a proper service is guaranteed for the future.

10.24 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I appreciate the fact that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is a regular user of the sleeper services on the east coast main line, and I can understand his concern at British Rail's decision to withdraw them from May next year. Running the railways is the job of the railways board—as the hon. Gentleman recognised—not the Government, and the withdrawal of sleeper services is a commercial decision taken by the board on commercial grounds. British Rail did not consult me or my Department before reaching its decision; nor did it consult me before deciding to start four new sleeper services, also from next May. British Rail has been trying to identify where the market warrants sleeper services and to provide them. It is withdrawing this one and starting four others. There is no reason why British Rail should consult me. Ministers do not intervene in such decisions, and it would be wrong for me to ask British Rail to change this decision.

The Government's main role is to set the rules and disciplines within which BR operates and then to leave it the freedom to get on and run the business without constant political interference. That is why we gave the chairman a clear and comprehensive set of objectives in 1983 and again last year. These objectives have been very successful in helping BR to manage the railway efficiently.

The Government have also set a date for the implementation of the policy first established by the Labour Government in their transport policy White Paper of 1977, when they stated that long distance inter-urban travel should not be subsidised. This is because the customer is ultimately best served by free competition between modes. That is why InterCity will not be eligible for grant after the end of this financial year. InterCity will then be like any other business—eager to find methods of creating, improving and retaining markets, but unable to keep going those which cannot be made profitable. Again, like any other business it will be reluctant to lose customers, which is why I hope that it has considered all the options for improving the east coast sleepers before coming to its decision.

There is no doubt that the Government have given InterCity a big challenge but, after all, as the director of that sector said only a couple of weeks ago, he likes a challenge. There is also no doubt that InterCity is critically examining its costs and revenues as never before—a salutory and extremely important task for a business which has to survive in the market place. But I must stress that it is BR's job to decide how best to meet the Government's objectives. It runs the railway and it must take the decisions—anything else would be a recipe for confusion and inefficiency.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that British Rail seems to have gone to considerable lengths to deter customers on this line by providing a service and timetable that are almost unusable, not only by those hon. Members who have spoken but by people on Tyneside and elsewhere?

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

The proposed alternative is just not good enough. Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to talk further to British Rail about this matter?

Mr. Mitchell: I think that the most helpful way in which I can proceed in connection with the hon. Gentleman's allegations, and I hope that it will help the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, is if I draw the attention of the British Rail management to the points that have been made. It is right that, although the decisions rest with the board rather than with me, the board should be aware of hon. Members' views.

The Government's objectives are not the only reason why BR has been considering the future of the sleeper services on the east coast main line. At least as important, ironically, are the major improvements which electrification will bring to that line. The fastest service from Newcastle to London now takes three hours four minutes, and after the electrification that we authorised is completed it will take some 2 hours 40 minutes. The daytime services from stations such as Berwick will be fast and efficient. After the enormous investment on the line, I think that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire can rest assured that those services will be much more secure.

There are precious few places in this country where sleeper services are run for journeys as short as two hours 40 minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Manchester."] I shall come to that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Liverpool."] One does not do the journey to Liverpool in two hours 40 minutes.

Precious few places have sleeper services on journeys as short as that. Indeed on many journeys to a London terminus taking that length of time no sleeper service is provided.

The result of improvements to daytime services is that demand for sleepers on the east coast line is falling. British Rail tells me that during the 40 weeks up to 9 August, an average of 14 people used the Newcastle to London sleeper services in each direction every night. From other stations on the line there were even fewer users—less than two a night between Berwick and London and only one every five nights between Alnmouth and London. That might even have been the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

The whole point about the changes that British Rail proposes is that they will provide a better timetabled service for those who seek to travel on the route.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Minister accept from me that about three months ago I had an altercation with a senior civil servant, whom I had better not name, who was not aware that the service from King's Cross to Edinburgh still existed?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention, which gives me the opportunity to reaffirm that civil servants do not run the railways. I am not surprised that they do not know the details of the timetables. It is not their job to know them; it is British Rail's job.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that it would profoundly depress the economic viability of the whole area if the Berwick-upon-Tweed service was discontinued. On average, there are two sleeper passengers a night. I do not believe that the economy of the locality is so fragile and so centred on two passengers a night that British Rail should have to provide that service at a huge loss. Moreover, the fare that those people are paying probably does not even cover the cost of stopping the train at that station, let alone all the other costs inherent in the operation.

Mr. Beith: The Minister really cannot suggest that a return fare of £136 does not justify stopping the train, or that the key business men and entrepreneurs whom we try to attract to areas such as ours are irrelevant to the future economy of those areas.

Mr. Mitchell: Of course I do not suggest that. In a moment I shall give the hon. Gentleman some figures which I hope will give him cause to think whether it is a proper use of resources to provide sleeper services for as few as two passengers a night—even if one of them is the hon. Gentleman.

I understand that because the average usage from these intermediate stations is low, British Rail makes a substantial loss on the sleepers on the east coast main line. It has calculated the difference between its costs in operating the service and the revenue that it receives. This amounts to an average of some £35 for each passenger using the sleepers on this line. That is nearly half the first class fare, including sleeper supplement, between King's Cross and Newcastle, and more than half of the second class fare plus sleeper supplement between King's Cross and Newcastle or Berwick. To put it another way, the passenger pays only about two-thirds of the cost of his journey.

This subsidy of £35 for each person making a single sleeper journey is at present paid by the taxpayer through public service obligation grant. From April it could only be paid by cross-subsidy from other passengers. I am not in any position to judge whether withdrawing the service altogether is the right answer, but I am sure that the current arrangements cannot continue. I understand that British Rail has considered various alternatives——

Mr. Beith: It has not.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman says that it has not. I am advised that it has. British Rail advised me that routing a sleeper to Newcastle via Carlisle has been considered but that it has been concluded that that would require an extra locomotive, which would be too expensive. Locomotives cost about £1 million each now. To have a £1 million locomotive to provide a service for the hon. Gentleman is something that, I think, he would not contemplate.

Mr. Beith: Can the Minister tell me how the train gets from Edinburgh to Carstairs without the use of a diesel locomotive?

Mr. Mitchell: There will be an electrified east coast main line at some future date. Currently, British Rail is proposing to provide a service on the west coast main line, which is electrified.

What is important is the level of service that will be available to people from Berwick and similar places, and the degree of inconvenience that they will suffer. As I said, there will be a considerable financial saving for British Rail by not providing the sleeper service on that line. However, passengers can use a new service. It is important to stress that, although British Rail has not found it possible to route trains direct to Newcastle, it has made provision in

next year's timetable for people who use the service now. Passengers can travel by sleeper from Euston to Edinburgh. They will have the benefit of better terminal facilities at Euston and more comfortable sleeping compartments. First class passengers can use the new lounge.

Passengers who use the new service will obviously be inconvenienced by having to change trains, but there will also be advantages—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will allow me, I shall spell out those advantages. People travelling north can have breakfast on the connecting train and still get to Berwick at 7.40 am—which is not an unreasonable time to arrive—and to Newcastle at 8.35 am. That is in ample time for a normal day's business. On the southward journey, instead of having to get a train that leaves Berwick just after 9 pm, has no restaurant car and gets to London at the inconvenient time of 5.10 am, the hon. Gentleman's constituents can catch a train at 22.30, on which they can have a snack. They then change trains in Edinburgh and arrive in London at a far more convenient time of the morning than they would have done on the old service.

Mr. Fallon: I have the job of translating all of this to my constituents. Is my hon. Friend really saying that those of my constituents who want to go home after a long day's business in London will have to go to Carlisle, then up to Edinburgh to have breakfast, catch another train and go all the way back to Darlington?

Mr. Mitchell: I am not suggesting that. People who want to go to Darlington can catch a daytime service, which is so much quicker than it used to be.

I am not in a position to judge whether British Rail has chosen the right way to deal with the undoubted problems of the sleeper service on the east coast main line——

Mr. Beith: Why not?

Mr. Mitchell: I did not form a judgment. I have simply advised the House of the information provided by British Rail about the service. I have undertaken to draw the hon. Gentleman's comments, and those of other hon. Members who have participated in this short debate, to the attention of British Rail management. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that I am trying to be helpful. It would be wrong if I did not give to him all the information that British Rail has made available that relates to the points that he has raised.

As I said, I am not in a position to judge whether British Rail chose the best way. Nevertheless, something had to be done: there can be no justification for a subsidy of £35 for each passenger using such a service.

Mr. Beith: That is not true.

Mr. Mitchell: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make that point to British Rail. If he can demonstrate that it is untrue, perhaps he will write to me, too, and I will ensure that his letter is discussed with British Rail.

British Rail should not bear the loss itself. It cannot forget for a moment the competition that it faces. Its product must be adjusted constantly to take account of new patterns of travel. British Rail is taking off one very underused service and putting on four new services in areas where it expects more demand.

Mr. Kirkwood: Where?

Mr. Mitchell: I should be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman with details of services in other areas.

Such commercial decisions can be hard on existing passengers, and the House and the travelling public deserve a good explanation of the decisions taken, the reasons for them and the measures being taken to help those affected. It is clear from this debate that British Rail's explanation to local people has not been good enough. I accept that. I understand that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will take up these points with British Rail, and I have undertaken to supply British Rail with a copy of the report of the debate. That is the right thing for the hon. Gentleman to do, and I hope that British Rail can satisfy him. I hope that he will remember that his constituents will soon benefit from the biggest single railway investment undertaken since the nationalisation of the railways. The investment of £367 million on east coast main line electrification will ensure that the trains are so much faster——

Mr. Beith: Because they will not stop anywhere.

Mr. Mitchell: —that many people will not need sleeper services. They will be able to reach Newcastle and Darlington in time for business engagements in the morning.

But having said all that, I accept that the hon. Gentleman is entitled to answers to the questions that he has asked, and I trust that British Rail will provide those answers. But as he probes the matter, I believe that he will find that it is not as he envisaged it when he began this Adjournment debate tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 26 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's answer to the Address as follows:

I have received your Addresses praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Bulgaria) Order 1987, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (France) (No. 2) Order 1987, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Nigeria) Order 1987, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Pakistan) Order 1987, the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Belgium) Order 1987 and the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malaysia) Order 1987 be made in the form of drafts laid before your House. I will comply with your request.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 3 December.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Monday 30 November.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 3 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic Prospects

1. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the director general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the economic prospects for the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Next week.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his award of parliamentarian of the year yesterday. Has he noticed that the CBI has published two reports over the past weeks since the fall in share prices, one of which showed that exports and orders are at their highest level since 1977, and, furthermore, that investment intentions are also at their highest level since 1977? Does that not show that, under my right hon. Friend's Chancellorship British industry is expanding and maintaining an economic growth which will take us well into the next decade?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, indeed, I noticed those excellent survey results. No doubt if the CBI had had figures for before 1977 they would have been the best since well before that date. However, that series of questions only began in 1977.

It is very significant that the figures show that the confidence of British industry has been undiminished by the stock market fall.

Mr. Beith: Will the Chancellor be discussing with the CBI the forecast by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research that growth may fall to 1·5 per cent.? Does he expect the CBI to agree with the institute's proposal for a two-stage lowering of interest rates to respond to the events of recent weeks, or does he still cling to the hope that there will be no deflationary impact on the British economy?

Mr. Lawson: What I do know is that the National Institute of Economic and Social Research has always got it wrong. Indeed, there is a very interesting special article in this month's issue on the British economy since 1979 —I commend it to the hon. Gentleman—admitting that the institute got it all wrong, and that the economy has performed far better than it ever imagined it would.

Mr. John Townend: If the increasing strength of sterling starts to affect the buoyant level of British manufacturing exports, will my right hon. Friend consider making further reductions in interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: I am always ready to consider reductions in interest rates when I consider them appropriate. Since the stock market collapse interest rates have, as my hon. Friend will be aware, come down by a full point. At the present time I do not think that any further reduction is called for, but it is something that I shall bear in mind —keeping in mind, too, that although it is a particularly difficult juncture at the present time because we are all concerned with the possible recessionary influences that may come from the stock market collapse, particularly from the United States, there are still inflationary forces in the economy that have to be kept under control.

Mr. John Smith: The right hon. Gentleman predicted in his interview in the *Financial Times* earlier this month that there would be a G7 meeting within a week of a deal being reached in Washington. Since that meeting clearly has not occurred, will he tell us what is holding things up and when that important G7 meeting that everyone is waiting for will take place? When it occurs, what will the British Government propose as a strategy to avoid recession? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us why he is resisting the calls to reduce interest rates, which would do so much to support British industry in what may be a difficult time ahead?

Mr. Lawson: As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has pointed out, British industry is doing extremely well and is extremely confident about the future. That is since the stock market fall. I hope that there will be a G7 meeting before Christmas. There are further stages to go through. We want to make sure, if we can, that the United States Congress will support the package that has been negotiated between its leaders and the Administration. That has to take place after the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States. We also wish to make sure that there are proper preparations for the meeting, including ensuring that the conditions are right for all parties concerned to agree to a stabilisation of the dollar. In my opinion that is an essential element in avoiding the recessionary dangers to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred.

Manufacturing Industry

3. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufactured exports since 1981.

7. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufactured exports since 1981.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): The volume of United Kingdom exports of manufactures has grown by 35 per cent. since 1981.

Mr. Davis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that welcome growth in exports is due largely to the fact that the growth in unit wage costs in the United Kingdom has performed well and is now expected to perform better than the majority of other industrial nations? In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the findings of the CBI report on exports?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His objective analysis is entirely right. The underlying point of most importance is that productivity growth generally over recent years, in fact since 1979, has been at around 4 per cent. a year—the fastest of all the major industrial countries.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our performance depends on our competitiveness? Will he inform us how our productivity compares with that of our overseas competitors.

Mr. Major: As I have said, our productivity is exceedingly good at over 4 per cent. a year. It is faster than all our major competitors. As the CBI points out in its survey, not only is productivity good, but so is output, and profitability and exports are growing. It is an excellent outlook.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Chancellor tell us what the rate of manufacturing investment has been since 1979, and will he confirm that it is among the lowest in the industrial world?

Mr. Major: On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor I can confirm that manufacturing investment is rising and the hon. Gentleman ought to be pleased at that.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that exports of manufactured goods have increased by 34 per cent. and imports of manufactured goods have increased by 81 per cent?

Mr. Major: It is true that manufacturing imports have grown faster than exports. However, that is hardly surprising, as the United Kingdom's economy is growing faster than those of its major competitors.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend inform the House that in his view the United Kingdom's manufacturing sector plays a major role in our economy, and will he outline the steps that he will take to ensure that Her Majesty"s Government minimise any additional on-costs that could in any way inhibit or undermine the future potential of British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Major: As my hon. Friend has said, manufacturing industry is of immense importance. That is why we are delighted that it is doing so well and that investment is rising. As for on-costs, the most important requirement for manufacturing industry is that we have a stable economy under good management, and we have that.

Mr. Morgan: In his encomium on the beauty of productivity rates in this country, will the Chief Secretary comment on the report of the National Institute, which compared the kitchen manufacturing industry in this country with that in the Federal Republic of Germany and showed that German productivity was 63 per cent. higher than that of our industry, making the same equipment?

Mr. Major: I have not seen that report. However, as I told the House a few moments ago, productivity generally is growing faster in this country than elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman would do more good for manufacturing industry, and all industry, in this country if, instead of repeatedly pointing out deficiencies, he pointed out our excellent growth.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that under the Government's policies our share of world trade is improving steadily for the first time for many years, in stark contrast to the deterioration that occurred when the Labour party was in power?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition may not like it, but the fact is that manufacturing investment is rising, output is rising, productivity is rising, exports are rising and profits are rising—and do not Opposition Members dislike it?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given that even the Confederation of British Industry is now predicting that unemployment will start to rise in the early months of 1988, can the Chief Secretary continue to ignore the real figures about the British economy—that on the monthly figures that are available to us manufacturing output and industrial production are starting to fall and that the manufacturing trade deficit is at its worst-ever level? Will the Chief Secretary start to face up to the real problems of the British

economy, which are that manufacturing investment has fallen by 8 per cent. since 1979 and is starting to fall again —by 1 per cent. during the previous quarter—and that it will continue to deteriorate unless counter-recessionary measures are taken? When will he realise that what he does not spend on higher investment today he will have to spend on higher unemployment tomorrow?

Mr. Major: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on being the *Spectator's* "Man to watch" but, having listened to him, I must say that he certainly is not the man to listen to, because most of his facts are incorrect. When he produces the right information, I shall respond to him.

4. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the net real rate of return in British manufacturing.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The net real rate of return in manufacturing has risen in each of the last five years to reach 7·2 per cent. in 1986—the highest level since 1973.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those remarkable figures are excellent in showing that in every year since 1981 productivity in the manufacturing sector has increased and that it is now about three and a half times what it was? Will he confirm that the real rate of return in 1985-86 was higher than in any year under a Labour Government and that that clearly vindicates the Government's economic policies?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Opposition Members talk continually about manufacturing investment and manufacturing output, but such things depend upon the rate of return and the profitability of manufacturing industry, and that is what the Government have made much stronger than for many years.

Mr. Skinner: If everything in the economic garden is so lovely, why have the Government imposed new charges on eyes and teeth?

Mr. Lamont: That point does not arise out of this question. The reasons have been explained in the House and have absolutely nothing to do with manufacturing. However, it is certain that unless the health of manufacturing industry and the British economy is sustained by our policies, there will not be any money for the Health Service.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the growth in profitability is due to the fact that we now have fewer strikes in British industry than for over a quarter of a century and that manufacturers are making again reliable, innovative products that the world wishes to buy?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right to describe those factors as being among the causes of profitability. It is also true that the dramatic fall in the rate of inflation has brought certainty and improved the profitability of industry.

5. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of investment in manufacturing industry.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): In the third quarter of 1987 manufacturing investment is provisionally estimated to be £2,783 million.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware that, on Tuesday of this week, the all-party footwear and leather committee reconvened in the House? Is he also aware that, since 1979, investment in the footwear and leather industry—vital to Leicester and the east midlands—has declined by 20 per cent.? What is the Chancellor proposing to do about that, not just as the Chancellor, but as a Leicestershire Member of Parliament?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to hear that the all-party committee has been reformed. If the figures are as the hon. Gentleman has described—I take his word that they are —I am delighted that a further searchlight will be placed upon them. Investment across the economy has been growing at the pace that it has over the past four years because of the extremely successful way in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is running the economy.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most active sectors of manufacturing in the past year has been the Opposition Benches, which have manufactured all manner of scares and crises about the economy? Can he tell us what real rate of return has been shown on that investment?

Mr. Brooke: In these difficult categorisations I suspect that that activity is a service industry. Certainly, so far as I can see, the rate of return has been negative.

Mr. John Smith: If the Government's policies for manufacturing industry have been so successful, why was there a surplus in the balance of trade in manufactured goods of £5 billion when the Government took office, but now a deficit of £8 billion and heading for £9 billion?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) asked about the level of manufacturing investment. That has grown by 44 per cent. since 1983.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not just the quantity of investment in manufacturing that is important, but the quality of that investment? Does he also agree that those two factors are helping our manufacturing industry throughout the country, particularly in the north of England?

Mr. Brooke: I agree with my hon. Friend that not just the quantity, but the quality, of investment is important. Since 1979 quality has improved, as is evidenced by the improvement in productivity and profitability. The quality of manufacturing output is also much higher, and that output is now above its 1979 peak. One might sometimes forget that manufacturing output fell under the previous Labour Government.

Overseas Assets

8. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of net United Kingdom asset overseas; and how this compares with the position in other major countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The level of United Kingdom net overseas assets at the end of 1986 was £114 billion, second only to Japan.

Mr. Carrington: Is it not significant that the level of our overseas investment, at 29 per cent. of gross domestic product, is the highest of any country in the world by that measure? That is a significant tribute to the lifting of exchange controls by the Government and the prudent

investment of our North sea assets. As a consequence, our earnings from overseas investments in the past year were running at £5·2 billion. That is a great tribute and a great asset to our invisible earnings, which, themselves, are a great tribute to the country's overseas investment and the earnings of the financial sector.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The figures that he quoted for earnings to the economy show that the benefits of North sea oil have been converted into a permanent gain for the economy.

Mr. Holland: Is it not a fact that the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) is entirely wrong and that the scale of our foreign investment substitutes for export trade? Is that not one of the underlying reasons for our low export performance in manufacturing, and are we not investing in the industrial modernisation of our competitors to our detriment?

Mr. Lamont: I do not think that that is correct, and I do not think that many people share the hon. Gentleman's opinion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said, we now have substantial earnings each year in excess of £5 billion, and that is of enormous importance and benefit.

Mr. Curry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that we have such substanital earnings from invisibles means that any deficit on visible trade has nowhere near the importance that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) would have us believe?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is correct. The surplus that we enjoy on our invisible earnings is the highest in the world.

Value Added Tax

9. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the European Economic Commission's proposals to extend value added tax.

11. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent developments on the proposals for the harmonisation of value added tax in European Economic Community member countries.

Mr. Lawson: As I made clear at the ECOFIN Council last week, we shall not permit to come into force any proposals that in any way conflict with the pledges that Her Majesty's Government have given concerning the United Kingdom's zero rates of VAT.

Mr. Galbraith: The largest manufacturer in my constituency is the publishing firm Collins. Will the Chancellor give a categorical assurance that he will not impose VAT on books? If he is intent on taxing knowledge, will he tax the Bible?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's Budget representation. I have noted it, as I note all Budget representations.

Mr. Garrett: Is the Chancellor aware of the great concern among manufacturing companies in my constituency about the threatened imposition of VAT on printed matter and children's shoes? Leaving aside the wider policy issue about the correctness of imposing VAT on books and children's clothing, is he aware that hundreds of jobs could be at stake if those two industries were penalised in that way?

Mr. Lawson: I will answer in two ways. First, one of the pledges that was given during the general election campaign was that we would maintain the zero rate on children's clothing and shoes. All pledges that we made during the election campaign will be honoured. Secondly, under the stewardship of the Government, we have since 1983 created more jobs than the rest of the Common Market put together. There is no need for the hon. Gentleman to fear for jobs so long as this Government's policies continue.

Mr. Gow: Will my right hon. Friend temper his admiration for his noble Friend, Lord Cockfield, by asserting to the House that it is the view of many Conservative Members that decisions about the scope and the rates of VAT should be taken by him and by Parliament, and not by people, however eminent, in the Commission at Brussels?

Mr. Lawson: I fully understand the strength of support for the view just expressed by my hon. Friend, although he will know that there are a number of ways in which we are already committed by Community law in this matter, as were the previous Labour Government. As for my admiration or not for Lord Cockfield, I must say that if he had heard this exchange he would have been rather surprised.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the threshold level for VAT, starting at £21,300, is absurdly low? Will he use his best endeavours in Europe to get it raised and thereby save a tremendous amount of time of small firms and of civil servants?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend has made an important point that is particularly pertinent in the context of my previous answer, because that is one of the ways in which we are bound by Community law. We have our VAT threshold at the highest level permitted under Community law. We are pushing very hard for that to be increased, but of course that requires unanimous agreement by all countries. The fact that unanimity is required in tax matters benefits us in other ways. It enables us to prevent changes in Community law of which we disapprove.

Mr. Yeo: In the admittedly hypothetical event that my right hon. Friend is required to impose VAT on new building, will he assure the House that he will consider sympathetically representations from voluntary organisatons that VAT should not be imposed on new construction projects for which funds have been raised voluntarily from the British public?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is referring to the infraction case about which we expect to hear the verdict of the European court in the early part of next year. That case was fought extremely vigorously by the Government and of course we hope to win it. If by any mischance I am wrong and we do not win the case, of course we would consider very carefully and sympathetically the points made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Henderson: Will the Chancellor confirm that the Government intend to continue to zero-rate VAT on food? If that is so, when will he announce the removal of VAT

on nuts, crisps and chocolate-coated biscuits, which are an important part of the diet of my constituents and no doubt others?

Mr. Lawson: I am interested to learn about the diet of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, as I was not previously aware of that. VAT on nuts, crisps and chocolate-coated biscuits was imposed by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might like to have a few words with his right hon. Friend.

Dr. Marek: Will the Chancellor accept that these are not Budget representations, but matters of vital interest to the British nation? Will he tell the nation that he will not place a tax on the Bible or books? We have not had such taxes in this country for the past 100 years. In view of the crass and incompetent decision to charge for eyesight tests and dental examinations, will he now have mercy on the British public and the NHS and announce that there will not be VAT on drugs and medicines? I give the Chancellor one more chance to come clean with the country.

Mr. Lawson: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me that chance. If I may say so—and this is not saying a great deal—the country has rather more confidence in me than in him. As I said earlier, we made a number of pledges during the general election campaign on VAT. All of those pledges will be honoured. As for any other matters, we shall stick to the convention, which I think is right, that statements are made at the time of the Budget and at no other time.

Confederation of British Industry

10. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the director general of the CBI; and what was discussed.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend last met the director general of the Confederation of British Industry on 17 November, when a wide range of issues were discussed.

Mr. Clelland: Was there any discussion on the needs of British industry in the areas of education, investment, research and development and our poor record in that area when compared with other industrial countries? What initiatives will the Minister announce to help British industry catch up and compete with our European neighbours?

Mr. Major: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman precisely what was discussed at the meeting between the director general and my right hon. Friend. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that over recent months there has been a substantial fall in the level of unemployment, reflecting substantially the fact that British industry is doing so well.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the views of the CBI, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be manifest poppycock to suggest that central bank intervention in support of a weak currency such as the dollar would not end in a manifestation of that instability being transferred on to another market such as the bond market, thus affecting interest rates? Would he like to comment on the cost of the support of the American dollar to the British economy? What effect has that cost had on interest rates in Britain?

Mr. Major: I cannot immediately recall who coined the phrase "manifest poppycock" to describe those circumstances, but whoever it was he was clearly a wise man.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I understand the argument for leaving a reduction in interest rates until after the G7 meeting. However, is it not clear that the likelihood of that meeting is receding week by week? Indeed, the Chancellor said that it would not be much before Christmas. If the meeting is much later, will the right hon. Gentleman adhere to the argument put forward by the CBI that there should be an interest rate cut earlier than that to help industry and to help to keep the value of the pound at a more competitive level?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor still hopes that there will be a meeting of G7 before Christmas. However, as the right hon. Gentleman will recall, there have been two cuts in interest rates in recent weeks.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Did the CBI make any representation to my right hon. Friend to the effect that it would be more logical and sensible to levy VAT on everything but at a much lower rate than 15 per cent.?

Mr. Major: I am certainly not aware that such a representation was made.

Unemployment Costs

12. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the gross amount of lost tax revenue due to the level of unemployment for 1986.

Mr. Major: No such estimate is possible.

Mr. Cryer: Is it not true that the loss of some 2 million jobs in manufacturing industry since 1979—including 130,000 jobs on Humberside—and the other job losses created by the Government are costing the nation £22 billion in lost tax revenue and unemployment benefit payments? Are the Government not prepared to accept that enormous cost to the nation because it is part of their continuing organised attack on the working class?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman really should not believe his own conspiracy theories. He may well not have noticed this, but unemployment has been falling substantially over the past year, not least in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency. I share his pleasure about that. He may also not have noticed—perhaps I may remind him—that the number of people in work has now risen for 17 successive quarters.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the recent buoyancy of income tax revenue, notwithstanding the fall in the standard rate, has been due in large part to the massive growth in employment in the United Kingdom since 1983, which has exceeded the growth in the rest of the European Community? What proportion of increased tax revenues is drawn from that increase in employment?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. As I said a moment ago, the number of people in work has now risen consistently for 17 successive quarters, and that necessarily increases tax revenue.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is there any chance that the Government will admit that while the total cost of unemployment is £22 billion, the misery, despair and

personal hurt of unemployment is borne by unemployed people and their families alone? What will the Government do to prevent unemployment from rising in the next six months, as the CBI forecasts it will?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman has fallen into the same trap as his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). He has completely overlooked the fact that unemployment is now falling at the rate of 44,000 a month and has been doing so for the past year. He should welcome that.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

14. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest tax relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £4·75 billion in 1987-88.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Chancellor aware that his lecture in Glasgow last Monday caused great offence to many people in Scotland? Was he displaying a heavy sense of irony in accusing Scottish council tenants of being sheltered from market forces, given that the total public sector housing subsidy for Scotland is £50 million, compared with a subsidy of more than £4,000 million to English private housing? Does he think that it is fair that the south-east of England, with 30 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom, receives 50 per cent. of mortgage tax relief? Will not Scottish council tenants get fed up with feather-bedding the affluent south-east of England?

Mr. Lamont: One thing that the hon. Gentleman did not point out is that relief per mortgagor in Scotland is higher than in England. House owners in Scotland will be interested to know whether the hon. Gentleman is really advocating the abolition of tax relief for home ownership.

Mr. Paice: At the earliest opportunity, will my right hon. Friend see what can be done to remove the absurdity whereby young couples receive double tax relief on a mortgage by remaining single and cohabiting, yet when they get married they receive single tax relief?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend will be aware that in the Green Paper on personal taxation we put forward a solution to that problem. Unfortunately, the approach that we advocated did not command sufficient support and we have said that we want to reconsider the problem.

Mr. Pike: What does the Minister think of companies, such as Bradford Investments, which give loans to people to purchase houses on rental purchase schemes and receive tax relief on those mortgages, when the purchasers have no protection or rights with regard to those homes? Should not mortgage tax relief in such cases be stopped?

Mr. Lamont: I shall look into the case that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Company Registrations

15. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the rate of new company registrations; and at what rate these have grown since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: Between the end of 1979 and the end of 1986 the net number of United Kingdom businesses registered for VAT is estimated to have increased on average by 500 per week. Early indications suggest that the rate of increase in 1987 has been greater than that.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is excellent news, which means that jobs will continue to increase and unemployment will continue to fall?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly concur with my hon. Friend. The creation of new companies registered for VAT has been mirrored by the fall in unemployment.

Mr. Hanley: Does my hon. Friend also agree that the number of companies being removed from the register because of liquidations has fallen this year for the first time in many years and that the economy therefore must be in the healthiest shape for many years?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to report to the House that bankruptcies, like unemployment, have been falling.

Economic Growth

20. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the rate of economic growth in the United Kingdom and comparable rates in other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Brooke: Over the year to the second quarter of 1987 the United Kingdom economy grew almost 4 per cent., which is faster than any other major industrialised economy.

Mrs. Peacock: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that investment in manufacturing in Britain, particularly in the north of England, is contributing to that success?

Mr. Brooke: Yes, I join my hon. Friend in that observation. It is a significant fact that we are growing faster than any other major industrialised economy.

Ms. Armstrong: Does that mean that the figures showing that there is now a decline in investment in manufacturing, which were issued by the hon. Gentleman's Department last month, were wrong? What do the Government intend to do to ensure that areas such as the north will receive proper investment in manufacturing so that they can play their part in Britain's economic recovery?

Mr. Brooke: I think that the hon. Lady is borrowing from question 5. Investment has risen by 6 per cent. in the past 12 months.

Manufacturing Industry

21. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufactured exports since 1981.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis).

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply, but sadly I was unable to hear his earlier answer. Can I assume that in his answer he was able to tell my hon. Friend that great strides have been made towards increasing the level of exports of manufacturing industry in Britain?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend will be sorry that he missed the earlier answer. The increase was 35 per cent.

Mr. Winnick: Can the Chief Secretary tell us when the level of unemployment will be the same as it was in May 1979?

Mr. Major: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied that unemployment is now falling at a very substantial rate. If the Government were to follow the policies of the Opposition, unemployment would be rocketing upwards.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also received the Soviet ambassador, who informed me of Mr. Gorbachev's acceptance of my invitation to make a short stop in the United Kingdom on his way to the United States/Soviet summit meeting in Washington. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hind: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome for the improvements announced yesterday in primary health care, which will mean that there will be more immunisation and cervical screening as well as health checks for the young and old, and the ability for patients to change doctors?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. Since 1979 there have been major improvements in health care provided by doctors and dentists. For example, the number of people on doctors' lists has gone down from 2,200 to an average of 2,000, and overall expenditure on primary health care has gone up by 40 per cent. in real terms, and is planned to rise by another 11 per cent. during the next three years. We have proposed a radical set of reforms to raise the standard of care further.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether, if charges are imposed on a service that was previously free, more or fewer people be inclined to use it?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that it will make very much difference. All the records show that after substantial increases in dental charges imposed by the Labour Government in 1976 and 1977, and some by us, the number of courses of treatment in England went up from 29 million in 1979 to 32 million last year.

Mr. Kinnock: All the figures, and indeed the practitioners, do not agree with what the Prime Minister claims about the effects of charges. When it is known that health charges inhibit people from seeking treatment and testing, and when testing is itself an essential part of preventive medicine, is not the imposition of charges on testing economically stupid as well as being completely morally disreputable?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman was listening to the figures I gave. There were substantial increases in dental charges during the 1970s, imposed by the Labour Government. In 1977 they increased the maximum charge for routine treatment by more than 40 per cent. They increased the charge for a course of treatment by 150 per cent., for a set of dentures by more than 67 per cent. and for metal dentures by 150 per cent. The number of courses of treatment has gone up from 29 million in 1979 to 32 million last year. That was against a background in which many children had no dental decay largely because of the inclusion of fluoride in water and toothpaste.

Mr. David Howell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the visit of Mr. Gorbachev, which she has just announced, is very welcome? Will she tell her visitor that we have read with interest his plans and indeed his book for a perestroika, or restructuring? Will she tell him that if he cares to make his stay a little longer she might be able to give him tips on how to make the enterprise culture work, which he would find useful in further Soviet reforms?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. As he is aware, we firmly support the bold and courageous changes that are being made internally within the Soviet Union and wish them well. We support the new intermediate nuclear weapons treaty that will so soon be signed. I hope that Mr. Gorbachev will accept my invitation for a longer stay, but I am pleased that he is coming to visit us and that we can have talks before he meets President Reagan.

Mr. Beggs: In the course of her busy schedule, has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read pages 1 and 24 in *The Times* today, where there is a description of a high-speed IRA chase which took place in the Republic? Does she agree that the article outlines the close relationship between the IRA and Sin Fein and also highlights the failure to date to secure proper co-operation from the Republic on extradition in that an IRA man, who had escaped from the Maze prison and who was under surveillance in the Republic, was arrested and then released 10 minutes after an extradition warrant had been signed in a Belfast court?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the case of Mr. Kane. Our understanding is that Mr. Kane is in custody in the Republic of Ireland on charges of assault and of breach of the peace. A warrant for his extradition on a charge in connection with the Maze escape was handed over early this morning to the Garda.

Mr. Marland: During the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend have a chance to consider the possibility of the Treasury funding the community charge safety net rather than ratepayers in low-rated councils, many of whom have striven to get thrifty councils elected?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to have the chance to point out to my hon. Friend that the Treasury has no money, save what it takes from the taxpayer.

Public Accounts Committee (Reports)

Q2. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to ensure that the Government's replies to all outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee are issued within a specific period to be agreed by the Government.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any need to change the existing arrangements for replying to Public Accounts Committee reports.

Mr. Allen: Is the Prime Minister aware that there have been 500 reports from Select Committees since 1979 and

that only four have been taken on substantive motions on the Floor of the House? Is she aware that the PAC, which is meant to supervise on behalf of the House £160 billion of public expenditure, has only one day's debate? When will the Prime Minister side with parliamentary democracy and accountability rather than with Executive power?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware that the PAC is dissatisfied with the existing arrangement. At present the Government reply to PAC reports in groups. I believe that has also been for the convenience of the Public Accounts Committee. If we were to move away from the existing system, we should need to get the Committee's views. Since 1979, 60 reports from departmental Select Committees have been referred to on the Order Paper as relevant to debates in the House. With regard to further debates, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen carefully to what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has to say in the business statement.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, my view is that we have had full debates on those reports? More important the Government have responded positively to the Treasury Minutes in response to our recommendations. Will my right hon. Friend note also that the work of the Public Accounts Committee would be enhanced if we could have the attendance of the three Labour Members who have been missing for many weeks?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point very effectively. I do not think I can add to it.

Mr. Rees: Is it the Prime Minister's view that extradition orders——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is about the Public Accounts Committee.

Engagements

Q3. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Ruddock: Is the Prime Minister aware that, following the Barber baby controversy, it has now been revealed that the lives of 34 children are similarly at risk, and that one has died while waiting for a bed?

Does she agree that the catastrophic nursing shortage arises because of the miserable pay and conditions in the Health Service? Did agency nurses have to be brought into that hospital for the operation to take place?

The Prime Minister: There are 64,000 more nurses and midwives now than there were during the lifetime of the Labour Government. There are 20 per cent. more paediatric nurses now than during the lifetime of the Labour Government. The number of paediatric nurses working on intensive care cots went up by 127 per cent. between 1981 and 1986. That shows an enourmous improvement in the services that are available.

I am not sure whether the hon. Lady is aware that the number of children who are surviving at birth and within the first seven days—usually quite a number of them die in that period—has increased, because the number of deaths during that period is down by a third. That is a good record.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend take time during her busy day to receive a report from the chairmen of the urban development corporations; and, in particular, from the chairman of the Teesside development corporation, who has some extremely good news for her since her visit there in September?

The Prime Minister: I cannot promise that I will do so today, but we shall certainly look at it. That urban development corporation was set up quickly and set about getting contracts of great benefit to the area. I am sure that its early success will be continued.

Q4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: As 34 cases are still awaiting operations at the one hospital in which the David Barber case caused such problems, what advice would the Prime Minister give in the light of the fact that David Barber received his operation only as a result of a tremendous amount of publicity being raised by his parents? What advice would she give to the parents of the 34 other cases in that hospital alone? Is it not time that she shook herself out of her arrogance and complacency in dealing with the matter?

The Prime Minister: I believe that David Barber has received his operation, that it has gone well and that the hospital has coped well. I have already said that the number of paediatric nurses—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the Prime Minister an opportunity to answer.

The Prime Minister: I shall give the facts, because what one can do is governed by the professional staff that are available, whose numbers have increased over the past eight years. The numbers of doctors, nurses and paediatric nurses, and the amount of money, have all increased.

I think the hon. Gentleman does less than justice to the work of those increasing numbers of doctors and nurses. It might be better if he would thank them and congratulate them on the work that they do.

Sir Peter Blaker: May I support the warm welcome that my right hon. Friend has given to the stopover in this country by Mr. Gorbachev? Will she say whether his stay will be long enough to allow her to resume the fruitful dialogue that she had with him in Moscow? Is she aware that there will be a warm welcome, too, for the INF agreement that Mr. Gorbachev is going to Washington to sign, which is a complete vindication of the policy that NATO has followed for the past six years?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I hope that Mr. Gorbachev will be here for a few hours so that we can have a good discussion both on matters affecting the Soviet Union and on the future beyond the intermediate nuclear weapons treaty, which I agree with my right hon. Friend is a vindication of the firmness of NATO and, in particular, a vindication of the attitude taken by this country.

Q5. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Short: May I ask the Prime Minister what she proposes to do about the desperate health situation in Birmingham? It is not just one baby. Many babies have had operations cancelled and are waiting for operations and this has been going on for months. There are cancer patients awaiting treatment. I have a constituent with a secondary cancer growing in his lungs and he has not been taken into hospital because beds are temporarily closed. We had kidney patients down from Birmingham yesterday who know that there is not enough money for their treatment after April and who fear that they will die. Everyone in Birmingham—everyone in Britain—knows that the Health Service needs more money. Will she stop giving us these party political points and give us a pledge that there will be more money? The situation is now desperate and people are dying as a consequence of a lack of money for the Health Service.

The Prime Minister: I shall go on giving the hon. Lady facts, because she and everyone else knows that greater provision for the Health Service can be made only out of greater growth in Britain's economy, and that is being provided by the Government. Out of that greater growth about 6,000 extra doctors, 64,000 extra nurses, more specialist paediatric nurses, far more provision and far more operations have been provided. This is paid for not by the Treasury or by some mythical person, but by the taxpayer. When we came to power the average family—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Faulds: People are dying. We do not want the Prime Minister's faked-up figures.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself.

The Prime Minister: The Health Service is not free, it is paid for by the taxpayer. In 1979 the average family contributed £11 per week to the Health Service. That is £570 a year—*[Interruption.]* Now—if I can make myself heard—the average family contributes £29 each week, which is £1,500 per year. Families are paying for the Health Service, and their money has gone to provide an increased number of hospitals and an increased number of doctors and nurses, who are doing a very good job increasing the number of patients that they are treating.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Housing Bill.

TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Education Reform Bill.

Motion on the Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER — Opposition Day (6th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Burden Imposed on the Real Economy by Government Policies". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "Protecting Lives at Work and in the Community". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Debate on motions in the name of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection relating to the membership of departmental Select Committees. Details are in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Health and Medicines Bill.

Mr. Kinnock: The Housing Bill that is set down for debate on Monday is, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, different in important respects from the Bill that received its First Reading on 19 November. The new Bill became available only last Tuesday, 24 November. Since the required time between the publication of the Bill and Second Reading will not have elapsed by next Monday — the day that is scheduled for the debate — will the right hon. Gentleman change the business for Monday, remove the Housing Bill and not bring it back again until the appropriate time has elapsed?

Will the Leader of the House give me an assurance that if the rate support grant statements are made in the House on the same day that major Government Bills are debated the sitting will be extended so that the Second Reading of any such major Bill may be adequately debated?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Education Reform Bill will be sent to a Special Standing Committee after its Second Reading next week?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on the implications for Britain of the INF agreement between the United States of America and the USSR?

I understand that the White Paper on the Warnock report on human embryology will be published later this afternoon. Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on this subject, which is of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House?

The Germans and French cut their interest rates this week; our real interest rates are, therefore, relatively even higher than they were before. Given the serious contradictions between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the management of the pound, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made by the Chancellor next week on the Government's current interest and exchange rate policies, whatever they happen to be?

Mr. Wakeham: The Leader of the Opposition has asked me six questions and I shall answer them in the order that he asked them.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the Housing Bill. It is a convention of the House, not a Standing Order, that two weekends should elapse between the introduction of a Bill and its Second Reading. I recognise that that is for the general convenience of the House, but there are many examples of Bills that were introduced by the last Labour Government when less notice was given. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that there was nothing in the part of the schedule that was omitted except subordinate and detailed matters more appropriate to Committee than Second Reading. I regret that this occurred, but I cannot accept his contention that there is anything to prevent the House from proceeding to appropriate Second Reading consideration of the Bill on Monday.

The second point that the right hon. Gentleman raised concerned rate support grant. I recognise the force of his argument, and when the statement is made it may be appropriate to extend the debate later in the evening, which can be discussed through the usual channels.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the Special Standing Committee procedure with regard to the Education Reform Bill. This is a matter for the House and not for me, but I should point out to the right hon. Gentleman that when the Committee procedure was introduced it was specifically considered that it was more appropriate for Bills that were not of party political controversy. I doubt whether the Education Reform Bill falls within that description.

As to the INF agreement and whether the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs should make a statement, I shall certainly refer the matter to him and ask about an appropriate time to make one.

I confirm that the White Paper on the Warnock proposals has been published today. This is an important matter and I give an undertaking that we shall have a debate on it as soon as is convenient.

I cannot accept what the right hon. Gentleman says about interest rates and his allegation that there is a disagreement between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House may recall that on Monday some Labour Members suggested that they should have the opportunity to vote on an amendment that they tabled with regard to the future of Scotland. It highlighted the difficulties of being unable to debate or vote on second amendments, except in the debate on the Loyal Address. Will the right hon. Gentleman say when the Select Committee on Procedure will be set up so that such matters and other matters of interest to hon. Members can be properly examined?

Mr. Wakeham: At the moment, I cannot say when that Select Committee will be set up. We shall bear the matter in mind. I thought that the best thing to do was to have

discussions with the previous Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure and to look at some of the outstanding points arising from the last Parliament and see how best to dispose of them. We shall then get down to setting up the Select Committee again.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): As my right hon. Friend has always shown himself to be aware of the needs of the House, whether in his capacity as Chief Whip or, briefly so far, as Leader of the House, will he reconsider his decision to offer only one day's debate on the Education Reform Bill? The Government rightly claim that the Bill will bring about a radical transformation of the education system. It consists of 145 clauses and 11 schedules, and many right hon. and hon. Members will wish to express their views on it. I am astonished that the Leader of the Opposition has not asked for further time on it. [HON. MEMBERS: "He has".] The right hon. Gentleman did not mention it. If the right hon. Gentleman wants an additional day, he is only supporting my request.

In time of war, when there were far fewer Members to discuss it, the Education Act 1944—the Butler Bill—had two full days' discussion. it was then remitted to the Floor of the House, where it had 14 full days' discussion. The Leader of the House will do the Government and the House a service if he offers two full days for the Second Reading debate, on the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly recognise the force of my right hon. Friend's argument and the generous and persuasive way in which he put it. We shall look at the matter through the usual channels. I doubt whether we can find two days in which to debate the Bill.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Although I welcome next Thursday's debate on the Public Accounts Committee's report, will the Leader of the House confirm that the Order Paper will highlight four or five of the reports to which we are drawing special attention? I refer to vehicle excise duty and the level of evasion of it, the Metropolitan police force and the need for accountability on its part, the prison building programme—unsanitary conditions will remain well into the next decade—and motorway problems, such as coning, and the inadequacies of the road repair programme.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the document that the Public Accounts Committee has prepared will be available in the Vote Office to all hon. Members who wish to make use of it during next Thursday's debate?

The three Opposition members of the Public Accounts Committee have been elevated to the Opposition Front Bench. We hope that, by next week's debate, there will be three new Members whom the Public Accounts Committee will welcome.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is glad that reinforcements are at hand. I am pleased to hear that. I did not follow absolutely everything that the right hon. Gentleman said, but I believe that the general thrust is correct. We shall certainly make sure that we do our best to meet his requirements.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Will my right hon. Friend accept that ex-athletes in particular are always grateful if they get a flying start and will seek to take every advantage of it? None the less, regrettably it does not now seem feasible for the Treasury Select Committee to take evidence and produce a report ahead of the deadline that my right hon. Friend envisaged some while ago. Will he therefore consult through the usual channels to see whether it would be better to have the debate immediately after Christmas rather than the week after next?

Mr. Wakeham: As my right hon. Friend knows, I stated to the House that I hoped that the debate on the Autumn Statement would take place before Christmas. In view of what my right hon. Friend has said about the Treasury Select Committee—his remarks have a great deal of force—I shall certainly have discussions through the usual channels to find out what is the most convenient date. It may well be after Christmas.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): When will the Leader of the House get some reinforcements from Scottish Conservative Members so that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs can be set up? With reference to the issue that was raised by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, will he persuade the Foreign Secretary to lay before the House details of the exchange of notes between the Government and the Soviet Union with regard to the inspection of United States missile bases in this country?

Mr. Wakeham: The setting up of the Scottish Select Committee is a matter for the Committee of Selection. I am sure that it will continue to do its best to nominate a Committee and find a solution to the problem. However, if the matter comes to me, I shall obviously be prepared to make time available for it to be debated on the Floor of the House. I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's second question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Has my right hon. Friend taken note of early-day motion 275?

[This House believes that the National Dock Labour Scheme is an anachronism which both endangers the viability of jobs in the scheme areas and acts as a deterrent to job creation by new ventures; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to abolish the scheme, and open negotiations immediately with employers and unions to bring that about.] The motion stands in the name of myself and 118 colleagues, and calls for the abolition of the national dock labour scheme—a scheme that is bringing a lingering death to far too many of our ports, and stifling opportunities for growth in those areas. Will he hold discussions with the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Transport to find out whether early action can be taken?

Mr. Wakeham: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern about the matter, and I shall certainly convey his remarks to my colleagues who are directly concerned. The Government made it clear in the last Parliament that they have no plans to change the operation of the scheme, and that remains the position.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I wonder whether the Leader of the House has seen early-day motion 328.

[That this House expresses its deep concern at the high incidence of child leukaemia on Tyneside, as highlighted in Granada's 'World in Action' programme; calls on Her Majesty's Government to set up an inquiry into this matter; and further calls on Her Majesty's Government to give its full commitment and financial support towards assisting the

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

statistical research which has brought this problem to light and towards the research which is needed to prevent further child deaths from this disease in the future.]

Will he arrange either for an early debate on the subject, or for a statement from the relevant Minister? Does he share the view expressed by several of my hon. Friends, and by the leader of Gateshead council, that the House should give urgent attention to increasing the funding for the nationwide research that is needed to tackle the problem effectively?

Mr. Wakeham: I have seen the early-day motion, and I recognise the concern of the hon. Lady and of many other hon. Members. The Government funded the study from which the statistics in the television programme derived. When the full report is received, it will be considered with our expert advisers. We have already made provision for further statistical research into the causes of cancer clusters.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Will my right hon. Friend consider the recent acceptance by Her Majesty's Government of the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and his right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make early statements to the House on what review action would be required by Her Majesty's Government if the proposal were dropped and British Caledonian merged with a nationalised foreign airline?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's continuing concern. The question that he poses is hypothetical, but I shall nevertheless refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does not the Leader of the House consider that the conventions of the House come about for specific purposes, very wisely, and after long deliberations by many right hon. and hon. Members? The Housing Bill is a major Bill, and neither the conventions of the House nor the Bill itself should be treated as lightly as the Leader of the House has treated them. But if he would accede to the request of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, we could have two days debate on the Education Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not treat those matters lightly. I understand that some minor errors were discovered in the Bill, as well as the omission of schedule 1(3), which contained technical details relating to resident landlords in the context of assured tenancy. The omission would have been apparent from a detailed examination of the Bill. However, as far as I am aware, no hon. Member complained about it until after the mistakes had been rectified, which suggests that it was not a general cause of inconvenience.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The publication of the Warnock White Paper is a welcome indication of the Government's intention to legislate on the subject. Will my right hon. Friend tell us how soon it will be convenient to have the debate? An early debate would be most welcome.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the desire for an early debate. However, I feel that the report should be studied. I shall wish to have discussions through the usual channels to find the most convenient time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Who will pay the £50,000 incurred as a result of the Housing Bill not being properly printed? Why should we not have two money resolutions when the Housing Bill is debated—one a call upon the purse, and the other a call upon the Secretary of State for the Environment? He is a dab hand at calling for the surcharge of Labour councillors up and down the country. Why should he not be made to foot the bill? He is a walking disaster area.

Mr. Wakeham: The error, which was a printing error, not a drafting error, was very much regretted, and I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are in any way appropriate in the circumstances.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): In order to afford my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) the maximum opportunity to support the excellent provisions in the Education Reform Bill, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House consider that he might serve on the Standing Committee that considers the Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is it not correct that the printing errors in the Housing Bill were so minor that an erratum page or slip could have been inserted? Whether the cost of reprinting was £50,000 or the £24,000 that I have seen quoted, is the Leader of the House aware that, according to the private hospital that offered to operate on David Barber, the cost of that operation would have been £15,000? According to *The Birmingham Post* this morning, two children have died because facilities were not available at that hospital. Why the hell was that £50,000—*[Interruption.]* Why on earth was that £50,000 not sent to Birmingham so that the lives of those two bairns could have been saved? Perhaps the Leader of the House could send a message to their families and the other 30 families still waiting for some money.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman does his case any good by attempting to put it in that way. The errors in the Housing Bill could have been put right by issuing a correction sheet or by reprinting. It was thought that it would be for the convenience of the House to reprint the Bill, and I should have though that the House would be pleased about that.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend tell us when the Bill to reform the rates will be published and whether he expects the Second Reading to take place before Christmas? Will my right hon. Friend guarantee that there will be two days on which to debate that major measure?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot answer those questions directly except to say that progress is going well. We hope to publish the Bill in the fairly near future, and I will bear my hon. Friend's request in mind.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Government have expressed concern in the past about local councils which seek to put their views forward in newsletters and so on. I understand that the Conservatives refer to the practice as propaganda on the rates. Will the Leader of the House find time to debate the Scottish Office

proposal to spend £100,000 on disseminating Conservative party propaganda on the poll tax in Scotland so that we can discuss the undesirability of Conservative propaganda being funded by higher taxes?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for one minute what the hon. Gentleman has said. If he looks into the matter, he will see that the conventions that appertain to expenditure on such matters by central Government have been observed meticulously by the Government. The Government do not use taxpayers' money to propagate their policies, but they do use taxpayers' money to explain Acts of Parliament to the public.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On the matter of next Wednesday's debate on Select Committees, will my right hon. Friend undertake to give the House the fullest information on the cost of running the Select Committees and, more importantly, on the saving to the taxpayer from the fact that the Committees have not been operating over the past few weeks so that we may fully assess the worth and value of Select Committees and whether they should be set up at all.

Mr. Wakeham: It may be for the convenience of the House if I provide that information in the form of a written answer to a question tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) rather than attempt to bring it into next week's debate, because I suspect that would be out of order.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The Leader of the House said that the usual channels would look at the setting up of the Scottish Grand Committee. Given the mess that the usual channels are making of the Scottish Select Committee, does he accept that that does not inspire confidence? By next week the Leader of the House will have organised a meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee. Will he explain why the Scottish Grand Committee is not meeting?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot explain that, but the hon. Gentleman ought not to be too discouraged about the usual channels. He and his party have some part in that. We have to keep struggling on as best we can and we usually come up with satisfactory answers in the end.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on transport and traffic in London and word the motion so that, among other things, we can consider the speed of traffic and clamping? The number of vehicles clamped has risen four fold in one year, from 26,000 to 107,000. May we consider the question of indiscriminate clamping and the severe effect that it has on people coming into London?

Mr. Wakeham: We have had a debate on transport recently and I do not see an early opportunity for another. However, perhaps my hon. Friend will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and be able to ask a question on Monday when the Secretary of State for Transport will be able to answer him.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): As many parents encourage their children, especially those who are nearing their twenties, to visit the dentist and the optician to ensure that they have healthy teeth and eyes, if the number of people visiting dentists and opticians drops after the charges have been introduced, will the Leader of the House undertake to reconsider the matter to ensure that we have prevention rather than cure?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. My task is to organise the business of the House, but it seems to me that the hon. Gentleman would be perfectly in order, if he caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, to seek to make his point in either today's debate or in the debate on the Bill that I announced a few moments ago.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm the recent report that it is the Government's intention to amend the Local Government Bill to allow local authorities to impose social clauses in their contracts with outside bodies? Will he undertake to ensure that that matter will be debated on the Floor of the House because many of his right hon. and hon. Friends will wonder why a Conservative Government should wish to promote and extend the activities of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the race relations industry? I advise my right hon. Friend that some people outside the House will feel that the Government are showing dangerous arrogance because, with the encouragement of a Government of a different political complexion, that clause could be used to impose great costs on industry.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot confirm what my hon. Friend has said. However, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will find acceptable any amendments that may be tabled to any Bill. I assure my hon. Friend that he will have a chance to express his views at the right time.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Leader of the House share my astonishment that, while the Chancellor has spent 40 minutes today telling us that profits are up and that everything in the garden is rosy, more and more employers are refusing to give their staff an hour off work to give blood? Does he note that, following the King's Cross disaster, a crisis in blood supplies was only narrowly averted? Will he take urgent action with his right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Social Services to ensure that employers are pressed to allow their staff to give blood to ensure that there are adequate supplies?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously the Government wish employers and employees to give blood generously. Many of us have reasons to be grateful to the people who are prepared to do that. If there are any difficulties, I shall ensure that my right hon. Friends are aware of them.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Will my right hon. Friend advise us as to when he thinks that the firearms Bill will be published? Will be assure the House that the White Paper will be published at least a week or 10 days before the Bill is published so that we can have a chance to study the first document?

Mr. Wakeham: I take note of my hon. Friend's point. I can advise him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department hopes to make a statement on firearms next week.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Is the Leader of the House aware that the *Belfast Telegraph* reported a massive deficit in the budget of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the coming year? Is he also aware that that will lead to 3,000 people becoming unemployed in the building industry? Is he further aware that the leak suggested that rent increases in Northern Ireland next year would be 9·2 per cent., which is almost double the inflation

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

rate? As that leak has been confirmed by the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive this morning, does he not deplore the method that was used to give information about such a vital sector and will he allow time for the matter to be debated in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: By definition, leaks are unauthorised and, therefore, I deplore them. However, I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): When my right hon. Friend is preparing his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on the cost of establishing the Select Committees, will he also make to the House a statement on the waste of money that has occurred while the Select Committee staffs have been waiting, without any work to do, for the five months since Parliament first met?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept that the authorities who run the House did not find useful jobs for all those expert people. I deplore the length of time that it takes to set up Select Committees, but we have done our best. Necessarily, a lot of discussions must take place, and the sooner we get on with them the better.

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): Is the Leader of the House aware that, on 23 July, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Social Services about the tragic death in my constituency of a five-year-old girl under dental anaesthetic? Despite contacting the DHSS on numerous occasions and phoning the Minister's private office several times, I have still yet to receive a reply—17 weeks after I sent my first letter to the Minister. Will the Leader of the House investigate that Department to discover whether inefficiency or obstruction or any other reason has led to the fact that I have had no reply to my letter?

Mr. Wakeham: I can think of no reason why the hon. Gentleman has not received a reply to his letter. If the facts are as he has put them to me—I have no reason to believe that they are not — this is obviously an unsatisfactory state of affairs. If the hon. Gentleman will give me the details this afternoon, I shall take up the matter.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend accept my gratitude for finding time next week for a debate on the reappointment of the Select Committees? Will he make a statement now to the House that the Government honour the independence and integrity of those Committees? If he believes that, does he believe that those factors are essential for the Committees to carry out their job?

Will my right hon. Friend also arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House and explain why there is such a short time for consultation between local authorities and the Department of the Environment regarding the allocation of the rate support grant?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course I value the independence of the Select Committees and I shall certainly seek to say so in the debate next week. The matter of settling the Select Committees is for the House; the House alone settles such issues. I shall refer the second matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the extraordinary revelation in a written answer given to me by the Minister for the Civil Service that not one person from the black or Asian communities has been on the Government's top management programme — that is, no one from the private or the public sector? As all top people in the public sector go on that programme, is it not clear that there is vast discrimination in employment that is preventing people from the ethnic minorities from rising up the employment ladder? May we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Employment and a debate on this matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that the second part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question necessarily follows from the first part. Certainly, the Government would not seek in any way, to allow the promotion prospects for members of the Civil Service to be organised on the basis alleged by the hon. and learned Gentleman. I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service to write to the hon. and learned Gentleman on that matter.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned to reduce the length of hospital waiting lists? May I draw his attention to the National Audit Office report, published on Monday of this week, on the use of operating theatres? It showed that, with improved admission planning and greater co-operation between specialists, management and the nursing profession, there could be a dramatic reduction in waiting lists. May we have an early debate on the report?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point well. I hope that he has the chance in either today's debate or next week to elaborate further on that matter.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is the Leader of the House aware that, in my area, there is a day of action, affecting every local authority department, against the Government's rate-capping cuts? It has widespread support and is sponsored by nine local trade unions. Those workers are protesting against the Government's rate-capping robbery that will devastate jobs and harm education, social services, the voluntary organisations, the libraries and other public provisions. Those workers have my full support. When may we have a debate in this House specifically on the rate-capped authorities?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman an early prospect of a debate on that subject. Perhaps he ought to have a word with his right hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench. However, if the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Government's proposals to try to control the excess spending of some local authorities is the cause of unemployment, he has a great deal to learn.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. Friend now able to inform the House as to what arrangements Her Majesty's Government will make next year so that we can all celebrate the defeat of the Spanish Armada 400 years ago?

Mr. Wakeham: I am unable to give my hon. Friend the information that he requires. When I have attended to the question of the late letter from the DHSS, I shall then consider that matter.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Bearing in mind our concern about terrorism, will the Leader of the House allow time next week to discuss the visit of Mr. Mojadidi, a well-known Afghan terrorist? That gentleman is scheduled to visit this place on 3 December. Will the right hon. Gentleman allow time for a debate, bearing in mind the serious nature of the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I am unable to find time for a debate on that subject next week.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May we have next week a statement from the Home Secretary to deny press reports that the Government intend to introduce changes to our criminal law at the behest of the so-called "war crimes lobby"? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such changes, coming more than 40 years after the end of the war, would be contrary to the best instincts of the British people? They serve only the motive of revenge and set aside the established rules of evidence that are the hallmark of British justice.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has got some extremely strong views on this, as have other hon. Members. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary met hon. Members on 17 November to discuss this grave issue. I understand that, following legal analysis of material submitted to him, the policy and legal implications are receiving urgent consideration. My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to inform the House of his decision in the near future.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House recognise that it would show total disrespect to the honour of all those who were the victims of Nazi extermination if it was taken as Government policy that those who have been accused, with substantial documentary evidence, of having been involved in Nazi mass murder should be allowed to get away scot-free with such crimes simply because they happened to come to the United Kingdom and take United Kingdom citizenship?

Does the Leader of the House recall the wartime pledge of the British Government that once the war came to an end all those held responsible for Nazi crimes against humanity would be brought to justice? There was no question of any time limit of 40 years or anything else.

Mr. Wakeham: These are difficult legal matters, and I am not prepared to add anything to what I just said to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook).

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): In the interests of cross-party co-operation and good will, would it be helpful if my right hon. Friend found Government time to introduce a debate on the coal industry so that those Labour Members who were unable to be present to support the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) in the Division Lobby last Friday would have the opportunity to do so?

Mr. Wakeham: When anyone asks me to find time for a debate on the basis of cross-party good will I always wonder what will come next. I do not believe that another debate on the coal industry would be helpful to either the Government or the Opposition. We exhausted that subject the other day.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Has the Leader of the House noticed that, on the Order Paper today, my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has a Bill that will address the economic problems in the north and what we can do about them? Will he ask the Secretary for Trade and Industry and the Chancellor to come to the House to tell us what they will do to address the economic inequalities which the people of the north continue to suffer and which those of us who represent the north will continue to bring to the attention of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept the analysis that the hon. Lady makes, but I will watch the progress of the Bill of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice).

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The Leader of the House will be aware that earlier today the Prime Minister promised that in the right hon. Gentleman's statement would be some interesting and good news about the number of days to be spent on the reports of the Public Accounts Committee. In case there was a "misprint", will he accept the congratulations of many Labour Members on seeing the former Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure concerning the outstanding business? Does he agree that that does not preclude the Select Committee on Procedure from now being set up, so that it can look at things such as a proper number of days to consider PAC reports so that the Government can be held to account to this House for their spending?

Mr. Wakeham: All those things move necessarily at a pace that may seem surprising to the hon. Gentleman, but they have to move with the general agreement of both sides of the House. We shall proceed to make progress as fast as we can. I am anxious to clear up what is left over from the last Parliament before we start on the new one.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Leader of the House invite the Home Secretary either to make a statement or, better still, to initiate a debate on the difficulties that we are experiencing in the west midlands, including Wolverhampton, with the levels of community policing? Representation has constantly been made to the Home Secretary by the police authority and I have continually written to him and invited him to consider that serious matter. The Chancellor, in his Autumn Statement, said that substantial new resources would be available to the police. Therefore, it would be helpful if the situation could be clarified to alleviate the great difficulties that people are experiencing in those areas.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have provided substantial increased resources for the police. It is an important matter. I cannot promise a debate next week but the hon. Gentleman might find an opportunity to ask the Home Secretary a question during Home Office questions on Thursday.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am sure that the Leader of the House has noted on the Order Paper the names of a number of his hon. Friends under the amendment to the motion on financial assistance to Opposition parties. I am sure that he has noted that almost all of those hon. Members hold extensive directorships, shareholdings and consultancies and practise either as accountants or barristers outside the House. In effect, they are part-time Members. Will the Leader of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that this matter can arise in the debate tonight.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Leader of the House arrange time for a debate about the need for Members of Parliament to be full-time Members and about hon. Members who cheat the House, this country and their constituents?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a moment the hon. Gentleman's allegations. *[Interruption.]* I wonder if the hon. Gentleman, after making disgraceful allegations about my hon. Friends, would do me the courtesy of listening to the reply. It is quite intolerable behaviour, and I suggest that he attends the debate this evening to see how he gets on.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Leader of the House show the same strength of feeling on the subject of the Health Service as he has just shown on the matter relating to his hon. Friends? Does he accept that there has been tremendous pressure for the debate on the Health Service that is to take place later today in Opposition time and that there will not be sufficient time to hear all those hon. Members who wish to refer to health crises in their constituencies? The David Barber case has highlighted the crisis in the west midlands. Young children in my constituency are waiting for admission to the children's unit at Birmingham. If, as I suspect will be the case, all those hon. Members who want to raise issues about the Health Service are unable to do so today, will the Leader of the House make Government time available because the Health Service crisis must be responded to by Parliament.

Mr. Wakeham: Nobody would pretend that the Health Service could not manage to spend more resources if more resources were available. Opposition Members would carry more conviction in their complaints about the Health Service if they recognised the substantial increase in funding that has gone into it since the Government came to power.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Leader of the House aware of the drawn-out saga of the sale of NCB houses? Is he aware of speculation that some people have bought those houses cheaply and have later sold them at a fabulous profit? The properties that are left are, in the main, occupied by people who have given a lifetime of service to the industry and are looking for a fair deal. Since I shaped up to the Secretary of State last week, I cannot get anywhere near him. Therefore, will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State to tell us from the Dispatch Box how he will help those elderly people?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, who I look upon as one of my friends, has perhaps overstated his pugilistic prowess if he thinks that my right hon. Friend is concerned about that. It seems to be a matter primarily for British Coal, but, if the hon. Gentleman thinks that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a role to play, perhaps he should write to him.

Points of Order

4.18 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise the subject of the interaction of the courts and Parliament because yesterday a judge stated in court that proceedings in Parliament should not be reported in newspapers.

In the case of the Attorney-General *v. The Guardian* and *The Observer*, Mr. Charles Gray, acting for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, asked whether journalists could report what had been said in Parliament on 21 July 1986 about the Wright case. Mr. Peter Alexander, acting for the Crown, expressed the view that it would be wrong if they were allowed to do that because it would defeat the purpose of the exercise being carried out before the court. The judge, regretfully, agreed with him and added that they should not report statements previously made. He did so in the knowledge that there was no question of statements being contemporaneously reported because those matters are dealt with by our rules of sub judice.

I submit that the judge has in effect ruled that proceedings in the House about a current case or about proceedings that took place one and a half years ago cannot be reported. Mr. Speaker, I ask you to make a ruling overturning the judge's judgment.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for statements made by judges. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me on the matter, I will consider whether it touches on the privileges of Parliament.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Speaker, further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No. I have dealt with it. The hon. Member has made his case. There cannot be anything further, as I have said what I will do.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Speaker, could I ask you——

Mr. Speaker: No, the hon. Member cannot. It is intolerable. The hon. Member raises one point of order, I give him the answer, and then he raises another one. I will not hear him.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On Tuesday I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Defence about the future of arms control and the intermediate nuclear agreement. I have now received a letter from the MOD telling me that my question is to be transferred to the Foreign Office. I drew third place in the shuffle, which meant that my question would be dealt with in the House. It has now been shuffled away to be placed upon the Foreign Office list in the hope that it will disappear. Should not the question be answered by the Minister of Defence as there is no way in which a question asked of the Secretary of State for Defence can be answered by the Foreign Secretary?

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to support my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who came third in the selection for defence questions on 8 December. Labour Members took the top 11 of the top 15 places for defence questions and Defence Ministers, who are afraid of the barrage that will be raised, are therefore trying to deflect hon. Members like my hon. Friend who

came third in the selection by shuffling his question off to the Foreign Office. Defence Ministers are cheating on the procedures of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Over many years Ministers have transferred to other Departments questions that are not their direct responsibility. There is nothing different or wrong in that.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to that point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), may we be assured that there will be a public ruling on the issue from you, Mr. Speaker, when the decision is made?

Mr. Speaker: If the matter touches on the privileges of Parliament, I need time to consider it in the usual way.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order about transferring parliamentary questions, would it not be better for everyone if the practice did not occur so often? Members of Parliament may go to the Table Office, which is under your jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, and be given a guarantee that a question is all right. I am not casting aspersions against the people in the lower Table Office, but it looks to me, on the basis of this incident and many others that have occurred recently, that Ministers may not be content with a question and transfer it. That means that someone who has been fortunate in the ballot is shuffled to the bottom of the pack on another occasion.

I can suggest a solution to this problem. If Ministers are playing fast and loose at transferring questions from one Minister to another, why do we not consider a system which allows someone who has been transferred from number three on defence questions and shoved on to the Foreign Office to be number three at the Foreign Office?

Mr. Speaker: That is an interesting suggestion. I must tell hon. Members that at Question Time every hon. Member in the House gets an equal chance. I look carefully at the questions to see whether those with questions lower down the Order Paper can have them linked with those higher up.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take another point of order, but this is an Opposition Day. About 40 hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. There will be very few speeches if we carry on like this.

Mr. Cook: I have a point of order on a different aspect of the problem about the transferring of questions from one Department to another. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that after the Chernobyl incident, my questions on the issue were quite numerous. At that time questions were shunted around five different Departments. That was understandable at the time because the Government were in confusion as they had been caught on one leg. As custodian of the proceedings of the House, is it not for you, Mr. Speaker, to rule that it would be unfitting for a Minister to come to the Chamber, as happened yesterday evening, and claim that confidence was abounding at that time when clearly that could not have been the case?

Mr. Speaker: We cannot return to the debate that we had last night.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 14 DECEMBER.

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Bob Clay
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin
Mr. Eddie Loyden

BILL PRESENTED

Northern Regional Assembly

Mr. Giles Radice, supported by Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Derek Foster, Ms. Joyce Quin, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Ted Garrett, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Dr. John Cunningham, Mr. David Garrett, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Dr. John Cunningham, Mr. David Clelland, Mr. Tony Blair and Dr. David Clark, presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of an elected Northern Regional Assembly as a regional authority and of a Northern Development Agency, and to specify their functions and powers; and to make consequential provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 29 January and to be printed. [Bill 58.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the Question on the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (Schedule 3 Amendment) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Air Navigation (Noise Certification) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

National Health Service Hospitals

Mr. Speaker: We now move to the Opposition debate entitled "Financial pressures on National Health Service hospitals."

I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. May I repeat to the House what I said a moment ago; a very large number of right hon. and hon. Members, including a maiden speaker, wish to take part in the debate. It will be impossible to call all those hon. Members, but many more will be called if we can limit speeches today to not more than 10 minutes. That would be very helpful.

4.25 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House notes that most district health authorities anticipate a deficit at the end of the current financial year; further notes that many of them are responding by delaying admissions and postponing treatment; is concerned that cuts in service may result in an inadequate supply of bed spaces to cope with the winter peak of admissions of elderly patients; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to provide additional resources to meet the immediate budget shortfalls and to undertake to fund fully next year's pay awards for nurses and other staff.

As we meet to debate the motion, Shropshire district health authority will meet in five minutes time to debate the cuts that will be necessary in its budget to fit in with the West Midlands regional health authority plans for 1990-91. There will be three options before the district health authority. The first is to close 10 of the 15 cottage hospitals within the district at a loss of 364 beds. The second is not to open the new hospital in Telford that is due for completion in 1989 when the key would be turned in its doors. The third option is to close the Robert Jones orthopaedic hospital at Oswestry with the loss of 300 beds to the district.

Knowing as we do the politics of the Conservative party, we suspect that were the Prime Minister present she would wish them to focus on the Oswestry solution. As it is, the officials have recommended the cottage hospital option. Any option will result in a sharp reduction in bed spaces in a district health authority which is already among the 25 district health authorities with the longest waiting lists.

Shropshire is no inner city area where the pressures of social deprivation have brought public services to breaking point. Nor, as far as I am aware, is it a nest of rebellious Marxists bent on embarrassing the Government for the sake of it. Yet Shropshire, in this matter at least, is typical of the nation. The dilemma that the health authority faces this afternoon is exactly the same as the choices confronting health authorities across Britain. I state that fact with some confidence, because this week I waded through the replies from 164 district health authorities that have informed me about their current financial positions. A total of 101 of them project a deficit to the end of the financial year. That is a clear majority of all the district health authorities in England and Wales. Even more alarmingly, that figure represents three out of every five district health authorities that responded to my questionnaire.

Most of the authorities project deficits ranging from a third of a million pounds to £1 million. Some comfortably break the £1 million barrier. Cambridge and Oxford health authorities predict deficits of almost £2 million. Sheffield predicts a deficit of more than £2 million. Paddington and North Kensington predicts a deficit at a record high of £3 million. As those cases show, the problem is spread right across England. They are spread from Cornwall in the west, which expects a deficit of £400,000, to Suffolk on the east coast, which expects a deficit of £916,000. They range from Winchester in the south, with a projected deficit of £530,000, to Northumberland on the Scottish border, which expects a deficit of £350,000.

There are 14 regional health authorities in England. In all but one, the majority of district health authorities report a deficit in the current financial year. I hope that when the Minister replies we will hear no shuffling off of the financial deficits as local problems caused by poor local management, which then, in a remarkable leap of logic, can be left to be solved by the same poor local management. This is a national problem. It has a common source in the inadequate funds provided by the Government and it can have a common solution only in more funds from the centre.

What makes the deficits all the more striking is that none of the district health authorities is legally permitted to run a deficit. Most of them have already striven to contain their budget by cuts in the first six months of this year. The deficits that I have reported are the residue left behind after every other attempt to balance the books. If those health authorities are now to be required to meet their legal obligations, they can do so only by making even worse cuts. Futher cuts do not bear contemplation.

Let us consider the measures already taken. The most obvious and most common this year has been a dramatic reduction in beds. Already—from 1979 to 1986—the nation has lost 40,000 bed spaces under this Government. It is manifest from the figures that I have received that this year the number of beds is shrinking at a rapidly accelerating rate. In the South East Thames region in the past week there have been two separate estimates of the number of beds lost since the start of the financial year. The region's medical advisory committee puts the loss at 500 beds, while the regional association of community health councils puts the figure at 800. Many beds are described as temporarily closed—a device used by many regions to avoid the legal consultation procedures which are triggered only if beds are permanently closed. The fact is that in present financial circumstances many of the temporarily closed wards have no realistic prospect of opening again.

The medical advisory committee of South East Thames is blunt about what that means for patient care. It reports that in the first nine months of this year waiting lists in the South East Thames area have increased by one fifth and it projects that by the spring, at the start of the next financial year, waiting lists will have increased by one third. The committee reports that there are cases of women requiring operations for breast cancer having their operations postponed four or five times. The House will understand the distress that such cancellations must cause to a woman who has a malignant tumour which she knows can be successfully operated on only if it is operated on early enough.

In all four Thames regions, doctors in accident and emergency units repeatedly find themselves spending hours looking for some flat space into which they can squeeze another emergency case. A consultant at the Royal Free hospital in Hampstead described one Sunday night in the accident and emergency unit:

"At the same time, all beds in George Quist ward were full, all the trolley bays were full, extra trolleys were used for patients in the corridor and even the trolley in the isolation room was full, as well as a mattress on the floor in the corridor. Two of the patients in the corridor had suffered acute heart attacks and were on cardiac monitors as no beds could be found . . . for them. There were also several patients in the waiting room, three of whom had suspected heart attacks. However, there were no vacant trolleys upon which they could be placed".

That occurred in August during the season when admissions to hospital are normally still slack. The peak season for admissions is yet to come. It will come when the cold begins to bite and when general practitioners seek hospital places for the elderly and frail who will not survive the winter if they have to stay alone in a home that they cannot afford to heat. It is plain that there are now no beds for them.

Already this month Maidstone district general hospital is on amber alert and will accept emergency cases only. It is rare for any general hospital to be on amber alert before January. Doctors will succeed in having elderly patients admitted only by taking surgical beds at the expense of those waiting for operations. That very point is made in a letter signed by 200 consultants in Birmingham:

"we have grave doubts that our hospitals will have adequate beds to cope with the inevitable increase in acute medical admissions expected during the winter months, without severely compromising surgical admissions and waiting lists. The effect of an influenza epidemic could be nothing short of disastrous."

Given that the beds are not there, it is perhaps prudent that operations have been the other major target for cuts. Doncaster district health authority has postponed 1,000 operations to the next financial year. Gwent district health authority has cancelled 14 operating sessions per week, involving the postponement of 1,500 operations until the next financial year. West Berkshire district health authority has postponed 3,000 operations until the next financial year. The mind boggles at the idea of doctors having to advise patients that they can come back in April because that is when the new accountancy year begins.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Given that there has been a massive increase in funding and a big increase in the number of doctors and nurses, will the hon. Gentleman explain how he can say that the management of the Health Service is in no way responsible for cutting beds?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman should return to his constituency and enter discussions with doctors who work there. They will explain to him readily and freely—as they will to anyone—that the resources with which they have to work are hopelessly inadequate. If the hon. Gentleman cannot be troubled to go back to his constituency, he could look in his own local paper where he will find an advertisement placed by those doctors. I welcome the new spirit of glasnost in the Health Service. I am glad that the events of the past six months have provoked so many consultants to speak out. I rather wish that some of them had spoken out before June, but no matter.

I cannot say that every Conservative Member welcomes the fact that consultants are speaking out. I have a letter from the Secretary of State for the Environment addressed to the Minister for Health. The letter has the authentic ring of his prose about it. The Secretary of State complained that a consultant had advised one of his constituents to write to her Member of Parliament and addressed the Minister for Health in the following terms:

"It seems to me intolerable that employees of the Health Service should openly criticise their health authorities and the Government . . . I would be glad if you could investigate this and see that the necessary action is taken to silence Mr. Guy."

I find it fitting that under this Government responsibility for local democracy should be in the hands of a right hon. Member who shows such sensitivity for freedom of speech. I am happy to say that the Minister did not succeed in silencing Mr. Guy, or, indeed, the doctors at the Royal Berkshire hospital.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): In relation to this rather elderly story, may I make it clear that the Minister did not seek to silence the consultant. I simply made inquiries and established that some of his remarks did not correspond with the reality in the health authority.

Mr. Cook: I am glad that I gave the Minister the opportunity to clarify the matter and tell us that he did not attempt to silence Mr. Guy. I would not have expected him to have done so. However, he will concede that it is clear from his intervention that he did, indeed, receive the letter from the Secretary of State for the Environment. We complained of the letter, not of what followed it.

The doctors at the Royal Berkshire hospital have placed an advertisement in their local paper in which they spell out the consequences of the cuts. Patients will be left in pain with hernias. Patients will be left going blind from cataracts. Women will be left in discomfort from vaginal bleeding that requires hysterectomy. All of them will be told to come back again after April.

As if to underline the lunacy of that situation, the National Audit Office has this week helpfully produced its report on the use of operating theatres. The report found that for half the time operating theatres are not in use. Reasonably, the office suggests that an increase in the scheduled time for which they are used would have a major impact on waiting lists.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) called during business questions for a debate on that report. It is a matter of regret that he has left the Chamber for this debate. He appeared to think that increasing the use of operating theatres was merely a matter of greater efficiency. Unfortunately, I must tell him that on average it costs £450 for every hour that an operating theatre is in use.

Unfortunately, the district health authorities cannot afford to maintain even the present rate of use and are planning to reduce it still further. They are caught in a catch-22: to cut the waiting lists they need to run the operating theatre more efficiently; to meet cash limits they must run the operating theatres inefficiently.

Some authorities cannot afford to use the resources that they have, but elsewhere operations have been cancelled because of the scarcity of resources. The House and the nation are familiar with the case of David Barber whose operation was postponed five times in six weeks. Today we learn that 70 operations have been cancelled by the same unit in the last five months alone.

I know that the problems of that unit cannot be solved tomorrow by throwing money at it. I know that they can be solved only by increasing the intensive care places available in Birmingham and by training the staff for them. I know that those are long tasks, but precisely because of that, the sooner we start on that task the better.

I have to report that, under the pressures that it faces, the West Midlands regional health authority has been

[Mr. Cook]

obliged this past month to suspend its capital programme. One of the casualties of that is the new children's hospital which was to be built on the Queen Elizabeth site and would include increased intensive care units for children.

This month, the doctors who were obliged to postpone the operation on David Barber were advised that the start on that new hospital has been indefinitely delayed. That condemns children in the West Midlands regional health authority to an indefinite future of the same delays and uncertainties that were experienced by David Barber.

I am told that Sir James Ackers, chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority, was seen in the House at 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon, walking down the Prime Minister's corridor. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to clarify whether it was the Prime Minister or Sir James Ackers who was offering to resign because of the crashing problems of the Health Service in the west midlands.

Nor is the Queen Elizabeth hospital the only children's hospital that has brought its problems before the nation. Earlier this month, the nation was startled to open its newspapers and discover full page advertisements from the Great Ormond street hospital inviting voluntary donations towards a £25 million renovation fund.

I can think of no more damning indictment of the Government's stewardship of the NHS than that they have driven that great hospital, with its long record as a centre of specialist excellence, into the arms of professional fund raisers. I do not accept that the Health Service should be funded through public relations accounts handled by the advertising industry, or by direct mail shots for the wealthy, or by inviting community groups to run bottle stalls and hold jumble sales. The funding of essential patient care is the proper responsibility of Government and there is no more important duty with which they are charged.

Now let me take up the point made by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). I have not the slightest doubt—on the contrary, I have every confidence—that, since this debate was announced this time last week, teams of statisticians at the Elephant and Castle have been sweating blood to find the best index and the most flattering base year to create the best illusion of increasing resources. When the Labour Government were in office those of use who were Back Benchers were at least able to take the statistics at face value. We may not have liked them, but we were able to take them at face value. Today the statistics are bogus.

The health statistics that we get are bogus, because they take credit for efficiency savings as if they were releasing resources instead of cutting them. They are bogus because they take credit for the increased revenue from increased charges. The Minister demonstrated that yesterday, when he took the credit for increasing resources for primary care by £170 million by increasing the charges for dental services and eyesight tests, as if he himself had signed the cheque. They are also bogus becaue they take no account of the fact that price inflation in the Health Service outruns the general rate of inflation. Therefore, any use of the retail price index is bound to give a flattering impression of an increase in real resources.

The truth, as the Under-Secretary the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) revealed, is that resources are getting tighter. The hon. Lady addressed a conference of the Institute of Financial Managers in the Health Service earlier this month. She said that the Health Service can expect its share of GNP to decline over the next three years. As I found that a startling new statement of Government policy, I checked with the hon. Lady's office and was advised that the hon. Lady's speech was not scripted but was accurately quoted, from which I divine that somebody in her office no longer takes entire responsibility for what she says. Why on earth the Government should wish to reduce the share of GNP going into health when, except for Greece and Portugal, we already spend the lowest proportion of GNP on health, I cannot imagine.

But let me offer to meet the Minister half way.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a clear distinction between the views of Conservatives in the House and Conservatives in the country? Is it not true that wherever we meet Conservatives they are embarrassed by the way in which the Government are running the NHS, that they, as much as anyone in Britain, want expenditure to be increased, and that they are tired, sick and fed up of the Government's indifference to public protests over what is happening? Why do not the Government respond? Will my hon. Friend confirm that that is the view of many of the people whom we meet in our travels?

Mr. Cook: If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I shall deal with what he has just said in a moment because there is a lot of truth in it. Indeed, I suspect there is even more truth than he has put before the House.

Let me, in a spirit of bipartisanship, offer to meet the Minister half way. The crisis in the NHS is profound. I am willing to rise above partisan considerations, so I will offer to concede that there have been some increases in resources — though not as much as the Minister will pretend, or statisticians try to tell us with all their tricks with mirrors—if the Minister in turn will concede that it is not enough to keep the service going. I beg the Minister for Health not to show the incandescent complacency that shines out of the Government's amendment, which must have been drafted by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, his junior Minister. Given the cash crisis across the nation that I have quoted and the effect in real terms of that cash crisis of which I have told the House, I beg the Minister to recognise that there is a problem, even if he is prepared to do nothing about it.

In the event that the Minister is prepared to do nothing about it, I must turn from my appeal to the Minister to the even stonier path of appealing to Conservative Back Benchers. Here I want to pick up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). It is not just that the Conservatives whom we meet in the country show anxiety for the state of the local Health Service in a way that we do not hear in the Chamber. When we meet Conservative Members in the country, they are expressing concern about the effect in their constituencies.

Over the past three months I have been reading quotes from many Conservative Members in their local papers. I particularly cherish the quote from the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) who, in talking about the cuts at the Royal Berkshire hospital, said:

"These cuts are totally unacceptable."

That was said by an hon. Member who was Minister for Health in this Government for three years. I understand

the dilemma faced by Conservative Back Benchers. I have been through it myself. As I said earlier, I did not hold office in the last Labour Government and occasionally I was unable to give them my wholehearted support. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are present this afternoon were in the same situation. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who was the hon. Member for Bedwellty, often joined me on those occasions. Fittingly, Bedwellty has disappeared from the Register of Members of the House.

I know the pressures and the tourniquets that can be applied. I know all the tricks of the Whips' trade—the visit from the heavy one who threatens to break your career, and then the soft one who takes you for a drink and urges you to be one of the boys and says that there might even be a PPS in it for you. I have been through it, too. The trouble is that it seems to work with Conservative Members. If we had a secret ballot at the end of the debate, we might carry our motion, or at least it would have a sporting chance, but since it is a recorded vote in which hon. Members will have to run the gauntlet of their Whips, I fear that it will be flung out.

I believe that the nation is badly served by the Minister, and is even worse served by Conservative Back Benchers who know that the Government are wrong and are acting against the interests of their constituencies, but who still go on voting for the Government in the Lobbies. Tonight I offer an opportunity to all those Conservative Back Benchers whose words of anxiety and concern I have been reading in their local press for the past month. If they really mean what they said, I invite them to join us in our Lobby, and to vote with us for the extra resources that they know the Health Service needs, so that we can start rebuilding a Health Service in which our constituents can once again have confidence, and in which Parliament can once more have pride.

4.51 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the increased number of people being treated in the hospital and community health services, and recognises and applauds the work of all groups of staff that have made this possible; congratulates the Government on again maintaining the National Health Service programme of hospital building and providing a high level of investment in the service next year; reaffirms its intention to continue the promotion of a comprehensive health service; and recognises the Government's achievement in establishing the sound economy necessary to support the continued development of the health service".

Despite the observations of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in the last few minutes, I make no apology for beginning my speech by setting out the essential facts that should form the foundation of any debate on the NHS and the Government's record of commitment to it. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman means statistics."] I mean the statistics, and when I look back at the statistics of what happened under the last Labour Government, I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman spent at least three minutes of his speech effectively apologising for the record of the Government whom he supported.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The Minister says that his only defence of current spending is based on statistics. What correlation is there between the statistics that he reads out and the needs of patients in the NHS?

Mr. Newton: I shall seek to deal with that as my speech develops. To start with, let me remind the House that in 1978-79, the last year in which the Labour Government were in office, the NHS in England cost just over £6,400 million. This year, we shall be spending more than £17,000 million. That is an increase of nearly one third in real terms, and it is an increase in any terms, whatever statistical analysis the hon. Gentleman applies.

During the last few minutes we have heard something about the percentage of the GDP that the NHS takes. The hon. Gentleman knows that whatever may happen during the next two or three years—and that is difficult to predict with any precision—it will take more than 5 per cent., and probably significantly more than that. Does he know what it was in the last year of the last Labour Government? I shall tell him. It was 4·8 per cent., which was significantly less.

This morning I asked the Department to do some statistical calculations for me. I asked for a rough idea, taking into account the greatly increased percentage of GDP that we are spending on the Health Service compared with what the Labour Government managed to achieve, of what the effects of that improvement would be. Back came the calculation that we are spending about £1 billion or more a year on health than would be the case if the miserable percentage of the last Labour Government had been maintained.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) outlined the difficulties that health boards have encountered throughout the country. If the Minister is right about the increased spending, and if he is right that everything about health spending is wonderful, how is it that the health board has had to cut £7 million from the current year's expenditure of the Royal infirmary in Edinburgh, in my constituency? Every night the hospital has difficulty in getting enough staff to staff the wards. In regard to capital expenditure, one operating theatre cannot be used, and another is about to be condemned. That sort of thing happens throughout the country. Does the Minister accept that, no matter how much is spent, hospitals throughout the country have serious problems which need money to be spent on them now?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. This is a tremendously long intervention in a short debate. Will the hon. Member come to his point?

Mr. Darling: I think that I have made the point. Will the Minister answer that question?

Mr. Newton: I shall deal with some of the pressures that exist. I ask the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and his right hon. and hon. Friends to reflect upon how much more difficult those pressures would be if it were not for the very substantial increases in expenditure undertaken by the Government. I readily accept that there is endless scope for argument about the statistics on expenditure figures.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): There is no argument about the measure.

Mr. Newton: There is no room for argument about another important measure of the increase in the resources that we have devoted to the Health Service, which is the increase in the number of staff. There are now nearly 15 per cent., or 5,400, more hospital and community doctors

[Mr. Newton]

and dentists than there were in 1978—and those figures are for 1986. There are more than 12 per cent., or 4,000, more general medical practitioners and dental practitioners. There are nearly 15 per cent., or 50,000, more hospital and community nurses and midwives. Those are huge increases of nearly one third in those important professional and technical staffs who underpin so many of the screening programmes. No one can tell me that that is a record of cuts.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Does the Minister accept that one of the reasons for the serious underfunding of area health authorities is that they are not given adequate resources to pay wage awards? That is a simple fact. Does he not see that Gwynedd health authority, for example, will overspend by £1·6 million this year, whereas it is underfunding wage awards by £2 million?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps one of the reasons for the pressures to which the hon. Gentleman refers is the Government's record of improving the pay and conditions of nurses. If he casts his mind back to the record of the Government that I presume he would have supported had he been here, he will register the fact that what happened then was a cut, in real terms, of the pay of nurses. No wonder there was less of a funding problem, because there was more of a nurses' problem.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: I cannot go on giving way at this rate, or I shall take up too much time, but I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. Although we take on board what he tells us about increased funding for nurses, the only thing that matters is whether we are treating the patients who require treatment now. Is he aware that I received a letter today from the Children's hospital, of which his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State used to be chairman, telling me that 45 beds have been lost and that a further 59 beds will go by the end of December? That situation never occurred under a Labour Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Oh yes, it did.

Mr. Howell Oh no, it did not.

Mr. Newton: Well, well, well. In view of what the right hon. Gentleman has just said, may I quote something that I suspect my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State might have wished to use later, and I apologise, therefore, for using it. It is an extract from *The Daily Telegraph* of 16 January 1979. What is it headed?

"Patients Sue Ennals Over Hospital Waits".

The article says:

"Four patients yesterday accused Mr. Ennals, Social Services Secretary, of failing in his duty to provide an efficient Health Service. The patients complained in the High Court to Mr. Justice Wren—in the first challenge of its kind—of long delays for orthopaedic operations because of the shortage of beds and operating theatres in the Birmingham area."

The right hon. Gentleman said that that had never happened under the Labour Government. I call on him to withdraw his comment.

Mr. Denis Howell: I shall not withdraw it for the simple reason that I said on the record that by December 90 beds would be closed at the Children's hospital, Birmingham. That never happened under any Labour Government.

Mr. Newton: The flavour of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, as he well knows, was calculated to convey the impression that the sort of problems about which he is concerned never occurred under the Labour Administration. That is simply not true.

Let me address myself to the point that is rightly of primary concern to the House, which is not the input of money or even in some respects of staff, but the output of patient care. Again, I make no apology for repeating the figure of the 1 million extra in-patients now being treated each year by comparison with the figure when the Government came to office, the doubling in the number of day cases, or the huge increase in the number of out-patient attendances.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I take it that the Minister's remarks are intended to convey that that is due to Government practice or policy. Will he reflect on the fact that more patients are treated simply because of a change in medical practice? That is unrelated in any way to Government policy. I well remember the days when someone who had had a heart attack would have been in bed for six weeks. Now, if it is uncomplicated, the person is home in five days. Therefore, there is scope for treating more patients. That is due to a change in medical practice, not in Government policy.

Mr. Newton: I recognise that much of the progress is the result of the dedication of all who work in the Health Service, but they would not have been able to increase their output as they have done without the extra resources that we have put in. That is the point on which the Opposition should focus.

Let me measure also, in perhaps more direct and down to earth terms, particular conditions and types of treatment and ask the hon. Member for Livingston whether he is aware of where things were when the Labour Government left office and where we have come to. *[Interruption.]* Yes, we have been in government for a considerable time. What I am about to give the House are some further details of what we have achieved in important ways for some important people. The number of kidney transplants went up from fewer than 1,000 in 1978 to nearly 1,500 in 1986. The number of people being treated for serious renal failure more than doubled from slightly over 5,000 in 1978 to over 12,000 in 1985. The number of hip replacements has gone up from 28,000 to over 38,000. I wonder whether the Opposition can tell me how many heart transplants were performed in this country in the year that Labour left office. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister must be heard.

Mr. Newton: Opposition Members obviously do not like this. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will be quiet for a moment, I shall give him this important information. The number of heart transplants performed in 1979 was three. Does the hon. Gentleman know——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members have anything to say, and if the Minister is willing to give way, that is in order. The Minister is obviously not giving way, and the House must hear him.

Mr. Newton: There is a notorious and notable reluctance among the Opposition to hear this, but my hon. Friends are anxious to hear the information. The number of heart transplants carried out in 1986 was not three, but 176. *[Interruption.]* It is no good anyone saying that that is just the result of improved medical practice. It is the result of the designation by the Government of two new heart transplant centres and of their making available the necessary resources. They now intend to designate a fourth centre.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I ask the Minister to reconsider his remarks. People all round the country who have been following the case of David Barber will be appalled and disgusted by the way in which the Minister is seeking to congratulate his Government on advances in surgery, while the Government sat there and did nothing when David Barber's operation was cancelled five times.

Mr. Newton: I make no apology for what I have said about the Government's action in increasing resources for heart transplant surgery, in designating new centres and in creating for a significant number of people the chance of a new life which otherwise they would not have had. That, in the end, is what the Health Service is about and I am proud that we have done it.

I have made it clear to the House on several occasions in the last two days that I am not prepared to engage in the kind of political debate which some hon. Members, though not, I accept, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), have sought to generate from the case of David Barber. I shall stick to what I have said on both previous days in the House, that I am glad that the improvement in the position at that unit at Birmingham Children's hospital was such as to enable David to have his operation yesterday. That is something that we all wanted. I wish him well, and I shall rest on that for the moment.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): None of us would disagree with what the Minister has said about advances in surgery and the numbers being treated. How, therefore, can he explain the fact that a coach load of kidney patients from the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham in the west midlands went to Downing street to deliver a letter and then came to the House to meet hon. Members on both sides representing constituencies in Birmingham? The coach was delayed by several hours because it had to stop on half a dozen occasions so that the patients could undergo treatment for self-dialysis while on the way here to ask that they should not lose that provision next April. Why do people in that position—with life-support units—have to be carried around the country by coach to come and plead for extra resources? With all that is said about the Government's success, that is bizarre in the extreme.

Mr. Newton: I hope that I have already said enough to make it obvious that the number of people receiving such treatment is, happily, a great deal higher than it was when the Government came to office. In this, as in many other areas, it remains our wish to build further on what we have achieved. However, I am not willing to hear Opposition Members voicing suggestions about the Government's record that are manifestly belied by the figures that I have been giving about the increases in almost every aspect of essential treatment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I am pleased that the Minister is giving hon. Members an opportunity to intervene in the debate, and I am interested to hear his comments on new buildings, reductions in waiting lists, and so on. Would the Minister care to comment on the fact that, five years ago, ward 12 was built in Treliske hospital? It was not opened until the beginning of this year, when it was opened temporarily for emergency work to be done to cut the waiting list. It will close again at the end of this year. Will we have to wait until the next general election before the Minister opens it again?

Mr. Newton: I am not denying that there are pressures on the Health Service, including those arising from its development and expansion. I am saying that those pressures are on a service that is expanding, developing and building new hospitals, and I would rather have those pressures than the ones that we inherited, which were those of a Health Service whose building programme had been smashed because the economy over which Opposition Members presided was incapable of sustaining it.

I could make a number of other points about the expansion of treatment that has taken place. Almost everywhere one looks, one sees a striking record of more patients being treated and improvements in the pattern of health care. These are the facts. They are measures of an achievement of which all Conservative Members are proud. That achievement goes far beyond anything to which the hon. Member for Livingston and his hon. Friends can lay claim. In stating these achievements, I do not seek to conceal the real pressures that the service faces. These facts are merely the starting point for any serious debate on the issues.

The second element in any serious debate on the issues is to assess in a more practical and realistic way than did the hon. Member for Livingston some of the reasons why pressures arise. Some of them result from our continued view that it is right to take steps to ensure the fairer distribution of health services around the country. I know that some of my hon. Friends represent as I do, constituencies in the Thames region, where there are difficult transitional problems, but I have never heard the basic policy — arguments about RAWP aside — questioned.

The aim is to ensure that some parts of the country, in particular the north and parts of the midlands — including the west midlands—that have previously had less than their fair share of the health services as a result of historical and geographical accidents have their position improved. By the redistribution of revenue, of capital and of building, those defects are being remedied — perhaps not as quickly as the hon. Member for Livingston or even I, in some aspects, would want—to a significantly greater extent than before the Government came to power.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the Minister consider the position in Cornwall, where it is estimated that, according to the RAWP formula, we are at least £2 million, and possibly £4 million, underfunded? Will that be tackled?

Mr. Newton: The South Western region, along with some others—including the West Midlands and North Western regions — is among those which, when the Government came to power, were about 10 per cent. underfunded by the RAWP formula. Now they are less than 4 per cent. underfunded. That is another measure of the progress that we have made in some of the areas in which all hon. Members are interested.

Let us consider demographic trends, in particular, the rising number of elderly people, which, as all hon. Members know, is steadily increasing the pressures on the Health Service and the demands on it. As it happens, because of the increase in resources that we have allocated, we have kept ahead of the measured need resulting solely from that demand, but it continues to create pressure and will continue to do so whatever the colour of the Government in office. Similarly, the medical advances that underlie some of the achievements to which I referred earlier contribute to developing pressures on the health services. They often interact with the rising numbers of elderly people. Improved techniques of anaesthesia and operating, and improved technical and medical skills, steadily increase our capacity to deal with the growing numbers of elderly people. I recognise the pressures that are reflected in some of the anxieties that have been expressed in the House this afternoon, but alongside them, our success in introducing new services, meeting new demands and keeping alive babies who would previously have died contributes to further increases in demand.

Many new increases in demand arise from the success of the capital programme of building new hospitals. Coping with those pressures entails choices: for example, between meeting additional demands for existing services, or maintaining those services unchanged, or undertaking new developments. It certainly involves examining the pace at which new developments can be introduced. Such problems are faced by every Health Minister in every country of the world, and would be faced by any Health Minister of any political colour at this Dispatch Box. Any speech that pretends—the hon. Member for Livingston pretended to some extent, though less so than did his predecessor—that these problems can be overcome by some easy solution involving resources is misleading the House and the country.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is the Minister aware of the impending closure of a ward in Sunderland general hospital? If so, will he inquire into the reasons for that? The staff of the hospital are labouring under the illusion that it has something to do with shortage of funds, but I am sure that they are wrong. Will the Minister find out the cause and report back to the House, so that we can correct the misapprehension under which they are presently labouring?

Mr. Newton: In view of the calm and reasonable way in which the hon. Gentleman made his intervention, I shall look into his point. I hope that he will understand if I say, equally calmly, that the Northern region and its health authorities is among those that have gained most significantly from the policies and additional resources that the Government have made available to the Health Service.

I acknowledge that we want to make more resources available on top of those that we have already provided. Within the last few weeks we have demonstrated our willingness to do that. We have said that next year a further £700 million will be provided for the hospital and community health services in England, and that still further additional sums will be made available in the two years after that.

Secondly, I ask the House to recognise that however much money we make available from the taxpayer—and we have made it available in significant, additional extra amounts—it will always be possible, for the reasons that I have described, to use more. We have set about tackling that problem by, for example, the emphasis that we have placed on surplus land sales. This year alone that will bring nearly £250 million additional money into the Health Service, and that will support the capital programme and those growing services that the system provides.

Only yesterday we launched legislation designed to enhance still further the capacity of health authorities to generate additional revenue. The hon. Member for Livingston called that tuck-shop money. If that money were available now to health authorities, it would be of significant additional help to them in tackling some of the pressures that the hon. Gentleman described. In the short term we do not think that the yield could be as large as the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have suggested. Whether it is £20 million—as we expect next year—or £70 million in three years' time, it will be a useful addition to whatever amount the taxpayer is able to make available. We know that if the Labour party had its way those additional sums would not be available, because the party has set its face against those sensible and pragmatic policies.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Bolton is 186 full-time equivalent nursing staff short of the number for which it is funded. Does the Minister think it helps his case to say that he is short of resources when he allows private hospitals to recruit staff trained by the NHS? Those private hospitals have contributed nothing to training. In Bolton our key worry is a shortage of nurses, and because of the aged and the mentally handicapped in the area we want to see that remedied. Our problem is the wastage of trained nurses, not recruitment. Those resources are being syphoned off to private health — a system that the Minister supports only for the sake of convenience.

Mr. Newton: It helps that many people in Britain, in addition to the sums that they pay in taxation, are prepared to put some of their money into private health services. That generates additional resources for health as a whole, and for many of the schemes under our waiting-list initiative we have been able to harness those resources in a practical and sensible way for the use and service of NHS patients. I make no apology for saying that we welcome people's willingness to put money into health, because it is money in addition to that which we take from them in taxation and contributes to the health provision of the nation as a whole. As I say, it creates resources that we can use for the NHS in the way that we have sought to do.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is my hon. Friend aware that, roughly speaking, 50 per cent. more is spent in the United States on private health care than on public health care? When we add together private health care and NHS health care in the United Kingdom we see that we are well up the league.

Mr. Newton: The totality of spending on health in Britain is a good deal higher than Opposition spokesmen sometimes give us credit for. My concern is to make the NHS as good as we all wish it to be. That is what the Government have been doing, and it is reflected in improved treatment, increased numbers of staff and additional resources. I welcome the opportunities that we often have to assist NHS patients in using resources from the private sector.

The exchanges of the last few minutes clearly illustrate one of the other matters that the House and the country should recognise in assessing the speech by the hon. Member for Livingston and the words of the motion. I have already said that if a Labour Government were in power I doubt whether the Health Service would receive £250 million in the present year from surplus land sales. That is because the Labour party does not like that sort of thing. I doubt whether the Health Service would have the prospect of £20 million, £30 million, £70 million, or whatever the figure turns out to be, per year extra from the income-generation proposals that we announced yesterday. It would certainly not have the benefit of the effective additional £600 million a year that has already been made available because of the success of the cost improvement programmes. Quite certainly it would not have the benefit of the £100 million a year within that £600 million that has been made available by competitive tendering so that basic services are provided more efficiently.

We heard much rhetoric from the hon. Member for Livingston, but we know that the last Labour Government spent less on health in absolute terms and in proportion to the nation's income than we have done. The Opposition have set their faces against almost every sensible way of improving resources for the Health Service. The only result of the re-election of a Labour Government, especially given what that would do for the economy, would be seriously to damage the NHS and make worse and more difficult to resolve all the pressures about which the hon. Member for Livingston spoke.

Mr. Robin Cook: What provokes my hon. Friends is that they cannot reconcile the picture that the Minister paints with what they see in their constituencies. Before the Minister finishes his speech, may I invite him to answer a simple question? Is there nowhere in the NHS where he at present sees failings and shortcomings? If he cannot see them, he does not deserve to be the Minister for Health.

Mr. Newton: I have already said a number of times that I can see many pressures. I can see many things that I would like to do on top of what we have already done. There are pressures on the Health Service, and there always have been, as I clearly said when I spoke about the last Labour Government. I have no doubt that there will always be pressures. However, the pressures now compared to those that we inherited—the pressures of economic decline and no prospect of recovery—arise from expanding services, backed by an expanding economy and providing more and better care than ever before. We intend to build on that.

5.27 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate at such an early stage. Most of my hon. Friends would agree that the west midlands may well have the worst Health Service crisis in Britain, and I must tell the Minister that, although I listened carefully to his speech, I do not think that he appreciates the scale and depth of today's crisis in the Health Service in Birmingham and the west midlands.

The chairman of the regional health authority has told us that one third of the district health authorities in the west midlands are now spending more money than they have been allocated for this year. He has also told us that two thirds of the district health authorities will be spending more than they have been allocated by this time next year. That is despite all the economies that they have made, and despite all the improvements that the Minister has described. Moreover, it does not take account of the economies and cuts and closures that have taken place in the other one third of the district health authorities. Sometimes we too readily forget that. All over the west midlands district health authorities are closing wards and beds in hospitals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) described the cuts taking place in Shropshire, but one can go from Shropshire to north Staffordshire and find the same story. One can go from north Staffordshire to north Worcestershire and find that the Bromsgrove and Redditch health authority has just closed an operating theatre, nine children's beds and an adult ward. The Tory chairman of the district health authority was scared to allow Labour candidates to enter that hospital during the election campaign because of what they might find.

The crisis in Birmingham is particularly severe, and it is particularly important because Birmingham hospitals, such as Birmingham Children's hospital, contain a number of regional specialties which treat people from all over the region. When the Under-Secretary of State visited Birmingham, the only answer that we received from her was the suggestion that Birmingham hospitals should stop treating people from outside the city. What a message from an Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. Hardly a day passes in Birmingham without news of yet another cut, closure or reduction in the level of health provision.

The whole House—indeed the whole country—knows about the crisis at the Birmingham Children's hospital as a result of the David Barber case. The crisis has affected other children who are waiting for heart operations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, David Barber had his operation cancelled five times in six weeks, but Birmingham Members know of a nine-year old child whose operation was cancelled five times in two weeks. The operation was performed only after her mother had spent 14 nights sleeping in an armchair next to her hospital bed and after she had telephoned the chairman of the regional health authority. The action that was taken by that mother, who was at her wits end, and the campaign by David Barber's parents shows what it takes to get an operation at the Birmingham Children's hospital.

The crisis affects not only children but adults. I have a constituent who was told by a surgeon in October that he should have an operation the next day and that he would probably be admitted within two weeks. That was four weeks ago, and my constituent has now been told that he will be lucky to see the doctor in eight weeks, let alone have his operation. All my hon. Friends from Birmingham could tell similar stories.

The crisis does not apply only to heart patients. The whole of Birmingham knows about the problem of kidney patients as well, and it affects not only patients at the

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Queen Elizabeth hospital but also those at East Birmingham hospital, which caters for my constituents. A few weeks ago, a consultant at the Queen Elizabeth hospital was told that if he dared to treat a new kidney patient he would be dismissed. That is the level to which the Health Service in Birmingham has been reduced. That threat was withdrawn only because of the publicity that surrounded it when it was made public by the press.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Davis: The hon. Lady knows quite well the doctor to whom I am referring, because that doctor wrote to her in July and reminded her that she issued the same sort of instructions when she was chairman of the district health authority a few years ago.

Mrs. Currie: We all know that particular doctor very well indeed. Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge two matters? First, about £250,000 has been allocated to the two units at Queen Elizabeth hospital and at East Birmingham hospital, which are two of the seven units that perform dialysis. Secondly, that doctor and his colleagues have a substantially underspent budget for kidney transplants. Spending the money that is provided is the permanent solution for many of these patients.

Mr. Davis: If the hon. Lady had not intervened I would have referred to the £250,000, for which she can take no credit, because she played no part in its allocation. It came as a result of an all-party delegation of five Conservative and five Labour Members from Birmingham, who went to see the Secretary of State for Social Services. The right hon. Gentleman saw us and said that he was impressed by the strength of our arguments. He spoke to the Minister for Health, not the hon. Lady, and the Minister found the £250,000. But where did he find it? It was not new money for the region; it came from the special allocation to reduce waiting lists. What the Minister for Health and Sir James Ackers did was to rob Peter to pay Paul. They took money that was to be used for other people's operations—in many cases life-saving operations—to get out of the heat of the kidney patients' problem. It was not new money, and I would have more respect for the hon. Lady and for the Minister for Health if they had come up with £250,000 of new money as the all-party delegation had expected when we went to see the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Currie: It was new money.

Mr. Davis: We all know the hon. Lady in Birmingham. I shall not waste time giving way.

What will happen after next April? What will happen to the people who will need renal dialysis after next April? The kidney patients have asked, "What will happen after Easter?"

Every hon. Member who represents a Birmingham constituency also has constituents waiting for radiotherapy treatment. Every hon. Member understands that radiotherapy is given to people who have cancer—usually terminal cancer. We have constituents who cannot have that treatment, and they have been told by the doctor that the beds have been closed. That is not an allegation from a Socialist or a member of the Labour party. That is what doctors are telling our constituents. Some 27 out of 68 beds in the radiotherapy department at the Queen Elizabeth hospital have been closed this year. We have it on the authority of the chairman of the division for radiotherapy that patients have died as a result.

The acute hospitals in Birmingham have only been kept going at the expense of other parts of the Health Service, especially community services. The chairman of the regional health authority has publicly admitted that community-based services for the mentally handicapped and mentally ill have been casualties of this funding crisis in Birmingham, but it does not end there. We are all aware of the pain, suffering and misery that is caused by elderly people having to wait for chiropody treatment.

Matters have now become so bad in Birmingham that in some parts there is a waiting list for aids for incontinence. In 1987, this is the level to which the community-based services have been reduced — that people are put on a waiting list for aids for incontinence.

No one is claiming that the Government are not putting more money into the Health Service. The Minister does not understand the argument, even though in parts of his speech he answered it. Nobody in Birmingham — Members of Parliament, community health councils or the members of district health authorities—denies that there is more money going into the Health Service in Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: Oh!

Mr. Davis: The facts speak for themselves, but if the hon. Lady can restrain herself I shall return to her in a moment.

More money is going into the Health Service, but the point is that it is not enough. The chairman of the regional health authority has said that the demand for acute hospital services

"continues to expand at a faster rate than the increase in provision of resources."

The Minister for Health himself said that the Government must increase the amount of money that they give to the Health Service every year, just to keep pace with demographic change. There are more elderly people and the demand and need are greater, so unless provision is increased to cover that, the service is not even standing still.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Mr. Davis: If the Minister will wait a moment I shall give him the figures for Birmingham, which are taken from the *Official Report*, so he cannot deny them.

We must consider the effects of new techniques and of being able to treat people who could not be treated before. The budget for the Health Service must be increased nationally by 2 per cent. every year in real terms. What is happening in Birmingham is clear from the Department's figures. The Minister's comments are in the *Official Report*. She told us that in the three years from 1982-83 to 1985-86 — I am not going back to the Labour Government; I am referring to this Government's tenure of office—which is a reasonable period, more money had gone into the Birmingham Health Service. That is true, but the increase over those three years was only 2·9 per cent in real terms. Those are her figures. However, 2 per cent a year for three years means that the increase should have been 6·1 per cent. On the Minister's own figures, the shortfall in Birmingham, let alone the west midlands, is 3·2 per cent. which is more than £8 million.

The Government cannot deny the figures. That is a real cut in resources as a result of demographic change and new techniques.

On top of that, money has not been provided for nurses' wages. In my experience, the nurses bitterly resent the way in which Ministers take credit for the increase in nurses' wages, when the fact is that the Government have failed, neglected and refused to provide the money to pay such extra wages. They have left it to the health authorities to fund increased wages at the expense of patient care, and the nurses know it. That is robbing Peter to pay Paul, too. That is the truth. That is why the chairman of the regional health authority — the Government's own chairman; their political appointee — Sir James Ackers, said that the crisis in the west midlands is largely the result of the Government underfunding pay increases for nurses and other staff.

The five community health councils in Birmingham have calculated that the extent of that underfunding because of technological change, demographic change and pay awards, from 1982-83 to 1986-87, totals £17 million. Is it surprising that each district health authority is having to choose which beds and wards to close, to say which patients cannot be treated, and which doctors must be told that they will be dismissed if they treat another patient? That is the situation in Birmingham at the moment.

Referring to the level of health services in Birmingham a year ago, the community health councils have calculated that they need £10 million. That is not going back to the Labour Government — it is not even going back five years—it is going back to last year. We need £10 million new money, not £10 million taken from some other part of an already poorly funded Health Service. We need £10 million just to take the Health Service back to where it was before the general election.

Ministers must take responsibility for that. When we see Ministers, they send us to the regional health authority. When we see the chairman of the regional health authority, he sends us to the district health authority. When we see the chairman of the district health authority, he sends us back to the regional health authority. In fact, the buck stops with the Minister for Health because there are only two alternatives: either not enough money is being given to the Health Service, or the people who are running it are spending it badly. It is either underfunding or it is overspending — one or the other. If it is overspending, the Minister should sack the chairman of the regional health authority, and the chairman of the regional health authority should sack the members of the district health authority. That has not happened because the chairman of the regional health authority knows that he is not giving enough money to the districts and the Minister has not sacked the chairman of the regional health authority — instead he has given him a knighthood—because the Minister knows that he is not giving enough money to the regional health authority. That is the truth of the matter. The Government will not provide the money.

In the Government's scale of priorities, tax cuts come before the National Health Service. I have yet to meet anybody—Labour or Conservative—who will put a tax cut before an increase in funds for the National Health Service. That is the charge that we make to the Government — not that they have not given more money, but that they have not given enough money. They have not given the Health Service as much money as the people want them to give. If that means that they have not taxed the people of this country enough, so be it; the logic is there.

People in my constituency and in Birmingham believe that the Health Service is in a state of collapse. It is the Minister's responsibility.

5.43 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): I think that all hon. Members will share my regret that illness has prevented the Secretary of State from being here this afternoon. One wishes him a speedy recovery. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who has stepped into what must be one of the busiest weeks that the Secretary of State would have dealt with — including Question Time on Tuesday, a major statement introducing a White Paper yesterday, and the first major speech on health in this new Parliament.

My hon. Friend presented the Government's case today with great skill, as he did yesterday when he introduced the White Paper promoting better health. As someone who had a personal involvement in the early preparatory work, I thought that the Department of Health and Social Security content of the White Paper was extraordinarily good. What worried me was what one might describe as the Treasury inserts. The DHSS contribution placed greater emphasis on prevention which I hope all hon. Members will support, the opportunity for wider patient choice, a service that will be more responsive to patients' needs — in the past, one has sometimes thought that patients were to suit the convenience of the professionals; that is not a proper way in which to examine the matter —or to seek better value from the substantial sums of money that we spend on primary health care.

Mrs. Julia Cumberlege's suggestions for community nursing and the way in which the Government have taken note of them deserve congratulations and support, as does the work that has been started in inner cities and remote rural regions.

I hope I speak with some authority—although with no knowledge of the detail of what is going on—as a former Treasury Minister and former Minister for Health when I say that I suspect that the Treasury input involved the new charges that were imposed. I refer to the abolition of free sight testing and free dental examinations. All those concerned deserve no congratulations for their political ineptness in including those two items in what otherwise was a constructive, imaginative and useful input which, at the end of the day, will lead to an improvement in primary care services.

That lack of political judgment leads me to a more general comment about politics. The exchanges that took place during the first part of the Minister's speech underline and emphasise the point that there is too much politics of the yah booing kind in respect of health. All hon. Members have a considerable, detailed and sincere interest in health, and they wish to express it. In some ways, the subject is too important to be involved in the highly party political exchanges that often occur. Although such exchanges are inevitable at election time, such an attitude at the beginning of a new Parliament, when a general election is remote from us, is inappropriate and, perhaps, damaging to the interests that all of us hold as important.

Trading selective statistics and the carefully drafted assertions that are made by civil servants or advisers to

[Sir Barney Hayhoe]

Opposition spokesmen—perhaps they are inevitable in such a debate—hardly carry forward patients' interests, which should absorb our attention. For example, it is absurd to accuse the Government of cutting the Health Service. Such accusations are made from all angles at all times. The hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) did not attempt to deny that more resources are going into the Health Service. The increase of 31 per cent. in real terms, based on the Treasury's GDP deflator, cannot be denied. That increase must be contrasted with the 14 per cent. increase in real terms, again using the same GDP deflator, for public expenditure generally during the lifetime of the Government. There can be no doubt that the Government have given the Health Service priority over other expenditure items.

However, that 31 per cent. real terms increase, which is very substantial in comparison with other programmes, needs to be looked at more carefully. It contains within it the 43 per cent. increase in the family practitioner services set out in the White Paper yesterday. Spending on those services amounts to about a quarter of the total expenditure on the National Health Service. Therefore, the increase relating to the hospital and community health services has not been 31 per cent., but about 26 or 27 per cent.

The fastest growth since the Conservative Government took over in 1979 occurred in the first few years, particularly in 1980-81, as a result of the Clegg pay awards. I shall not enter the earlier exchange about the relative position of the nurses, except to underline the incontrovertible point that their relative and absolute positions declined under the Labour Government. As we all know, that was part of the reason for the "winter of discontent". That Government's pay policy was imposed strongly on the public services, while elsewhere in the economy increases were proceeding at a much faster rate.

The time of reckoning had to come; it was inevitable. That was the reason for the Clegg pay awards. However, it has meant that, of the 26 or 27 per cent. real terms increase available to the hospital and community health services, a sizeable chunk — probably a third — was occupied in putting nurses' pay reasonably back into line at the beginning of the Conservative Administration.

Real terms figures are useful when comparing different Ministries and ministerial programmes. The Treasury has to involve itself in such calculations and balancing acts. However, real terms figures do not take full account of the relative movements of pay and prices within the NHS. In volume terms, taking account of NHS pay and prices, there has been a very small increase in current expenditure on the hospital and community health services. The volume increase in capital expenditure has been much more significant, and is the basis of the expanded capital building programme which has been gathering pace in recent years.

We must consider the claims of demography. An increase of 1 per cent. in effective services is needed—not necessarily in money terms — to deal with the increasing number of older people. We need about another 0·5 per cent. to deal with medical advance, and a further 0·5 per cent. for medical priorities. That is the basis of the 2 per cent. increase in services, the source being a letter that I wrote, following Nick Bosanquet's report, at the beginning of 1986.

In volume terms, no money has recently been available for the hospital and community health services to take account of demography, medical advance and increases in services; these have had to come out of cost-improvement programmes. But there is another way of looking at it. In the budgets agreed with the Treasury earlier in the year, or in the year before, there is an allowance for demography, medical advance and so forth. However, insufficient money has been made available for pay awards, and that insufficiency has largely had to come out of the cost-improvement programme. I do not consider that that is the right way to motivate staff. It is bad for their morale if they see little or none of the cost-improvement money going towards improving patient care in a tangible fashion that they can understand.

I have been talking in overall terms. However, my constituency, like the Minister's, is within the Thames regions, in London and the south-east. We have been RAWPed, experiencing a decline in available resources, while other more fortunate regions such as East Anglia and the north—to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred—have done rather better as a result of RAWP. The volume reductions in the Thames regions during recent years have led to cuts in services in many districts, despite vigorous and effective cost-improvement savings achieved by their district health authorities. Sensible competitive tendering arrangements, for instance, have led to a more effective use of the available resources, which have not been wasted in ways remote from patient care.

Another problem, particularly in the south-east, has been insensitive sub-regional RAWPing. The language is involved and technical, but it translates into real human problems, and sometimes human tragedies. Those at the giving end of sub-regional RAWP in the Thames regions give up some share of their limited resources to other districts in their region despite the fact that their region is receiving less than the average share across the country.

The main reason for the present difficulty is the cumulative underprovision for pay increases over many years. The Government must re-examine their public-sector pay policy, particularly its application to the National Health Service. The establishment of the pay review body was an advance and an achievement. It has benefited nurses and the professions allied to medicine, and has contributed towards useful change within these professions. However, the pay review bodies work on an annual basis while the world outside is now increasingly involved in two-year and three-year pay deals.

The Government should ask the pay review bodies to look beyond an annual award or recommendation, and to do so over a longer period of at least two or three years. It will then be possible for the Treasury to know much more clearly what the pay increase position will be in future years and, in the discussions during the public expenditure round, proper account can be taken to ensure that the funds are there to meet the agreed increment.

As I said earlier, at the heart of the problems facing the districts in trying to live within their budgets is the cumulative underfunding of pay awards, over which the districts have no control. Thankfully, this year — the reason is probably not entirely disconnected from the general election—the funding of the awards was more prompt and nearer complete than in past years. If I know

Treasury logic, it will do its damnedest in the coming year to avoid making good any underfunding that may result from the pay awards that come through in the months ahead. If that happens on top of the already acute position, we shall be in great difficulty.

I recommend longer-term deals that could help improve career structures, particularly for nurses who, as they look to the future, are now seeing ever more uncertainty and, as a result, many are leaving the profession. I am delighted that work is going ahead on what has been called "achieving a proper balance" for hospital doctors and consultants. Better relationships between junior doctors and consultants will be achieved over time and that will make the career prospects for junior doctors more attractive and, I hope, improve recruitment.

We need to improve the career structure for nurses. Although I am talking about nurses, there are similar problems for others in the NHS. We are now failing to recruit and retain sufficient nurses for the proper operation of the NHS. It is true that the pay increases for nurses during the lifetime of this Administration have been over 30 per cent., but that is now clearly insufficient to recruit and retain nurses. In all the discussions in which I have been involved relating to public service pay, the magic words have been "recruit and retain". We are not doing that for nurses. Therefore, urgent action is required.

Wastage from the nursing profession is still occurring at an alarming rate. I do not know what the precise figure is for nurses in training, but I was told recently that it was approaching 50 per cent. That is a tremendous drop-out rate. We know that about 10 per cent. of nurses retire voluntarily each year and, therefore, there is a great haemorrhage of trained man and womanpower from the service. Something needs to be done about it.

The shortage of nurses and money is affecting services to patients. The general morale within the professions is certainly not increasing as a result. In fact, in many areas, it is declining. In my district, emergency action is being taken by the district health authority to reduce the potential overspend this year. However, apart from that, my local hospital, the West Middlesex University hospital, is functioning with severe restraints, partly flowing from its lack of funds and partly from an inability to recruit sufficient nurses. Two geriatric wards have been closed as have one medical ward, one surgical ward, and half a gynaecological ward. We are 90 to 140 nurses short and there is too great a reliance on agency nurses, who are costly and not as effective on the wards. The hospital's intensive care unit of five beds is often partially closed. Yet when there was the ghastly crash on the M4 recently the West Middlesex University hospital provided the most superb, dedicated service to the many casualties transferred and taken to it.

The shortage of nurses means that the nation's expensive investment in high-tech equipment and highly skilled, experienced doctors, some of them at the top of their class in the world, is not being used effectively. That is a terrible waste of resources. The waiting lists and, more important, the waiting times—it matters not where one is on the list, but how long one has to wait—in many areas are getting longer.

I urge the Minister and, through him, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury —they ought to be here listening to the debate—to take urgent action. Special measures are required, particularly in London and the south-east, but also in some of the other large cities where nurse shortages and other problems are causing acute difficulties for the whole service.

Perhaps we should increase the London allowance and improve child care facilities and attempt to attract more people back to the Health Service after a career break. There are all sorts of things of that kind that must be looked at more urgently. One cannot avoid recommending another look at the expenditure plans for the NHS for 1988-89 and beyond. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making his Budget statement from the Dispatch Box in about four months. If he included a short passage saying that after careful consideration with his colleagues he had decided that it would be right to forgo a possible tax cut in order to provide more money for the NHS, he would be cheered warmly from both sides of the House.

The Government can be rightly proud of their NHS record as far as it goes. There are more doctors and nurses treating more patients more effectively than ever before. The Government can be proud of their record on hospital building. If I may make a local plug, I hope that there will be no delay in the approval of phase one of the new West Middlesex hospital. Improved management has meant reduced waste and increased cost-effective use of resources.

However, much more remains to be done, as the report of the National Audit Office on the use of operating theatres has shown. There is great scope for improved management of the resources, but the problems will be eased if more money is made available and that is my message to Treasury Ministers. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Health knows, relatively small sums of money —small in the context of all our public expenditure and even in the context of the £20 billion we spend on the NHS — will bring substantial rewards in improved effectiveness, higher morale and increased patient care. That is something which all of us would support.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Nearly 40 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Unless speeches are much shorter many of them will be disappointed.

6.7 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): In my opinion, the NHS, although not yet 40 years old, is heading for the scrap heap in favour of a new model bought on the free market. It is obvious by their actions that the Government have a vision in which the NHS is treated as just another force in the free market system, where health care is bought and sold like any other commodity. They can deny that as much as they like and employ all the arts of creative accounting in claiming that the NHS is "safe in their hands". However, the public are no longer fooled. The people's perception is at the grass roots. The evidence is plain. They know that the NHS is being squeezed by cash limits. The public bear the brunt when hospitals are closed and the Government escape.

As Liberals, we believe in the interchange of services and cash between districts to make more effective use of the resources, which in some areas are not used to capacity. However, we do not believe that the NHS should be left to the unbridled forces of the free market which is where the actions of the Government appear to be leading it.

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

Our hospitals are in crisis and the Government must share the guilt for the consequences of ward and bed closures. It is commonly agreed that the NHS hospital service still needs about 2 per cent. real growth per year after meeting the cost of NHS prices. The Government have not funded the full cost of the pay awards, forcing health authorities to meet part of the cost from their growth money. They have called endlessly for efficiency savings, now known by the new in-phrase of "cost improvements", or, in plain man's language, cuts. Even when the Government respond to genuine needs such as the recent initiative to reduce waiting lists—a measure the Government shouted from the roof tops—there is not an injection of new cash but it is paid for merely by a reduction in the growth money intended for hospitals. The recent, well-advertised £250,000 that was made available to the renal department at the Queen Elizabeth hospital was not new cash, but was taken from money that had been earmarked to reduce waiting lists in 1988-89. In other words, the Government were giving with one hand, but taking with the other.

Mrs. Currie: Anybody would think that the only renal unit in the west midlands was at Queen Elizabeth hospital, but that is not true. Half of the additional money went to East Birmingham hospital. A new unit at Wolverhampton was opened earlier this year and over £600,000 extra has been given to renal dialysis this year as part of the considerable development that is taking place in that treatment in the west midlands.

Mr. Denis Howell: The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) should keep going because he is right.

Mr. Fearn: I agree—I was right.

The RAWP policy to improve the position of the poorer regions is paid for by cuts in the growth money in other regions, with disastrous effects, as was witnessed in the London region. At the time of the publication of the NHS Management Board's report on its review of the RAWP formula, the then Secretary of State said in a press release:

> "I firmly endorse the report's conclusions that allocating to Districts must be based on a realistic and manageable plan for services, not the mechanistic application of financial formula".

However, that is exactly what happened in the London region. The system has been applied mechanically. Pressures from lack of funds, the need to find efficiency savings, the lower than expected return from bed cuts and the increase, rather than the expected decrease, in the utilisation of acute services have left London in an unenviable position. To relieve pressure in one area, cash changes hands, but because of constant crisis there is no time to plan and follow up with the interchange of staff and services.

We are all well aware of the crisis in our hospitals, but it has only just begun and things will get worse. Bloomsbury health authority, for instance, is expecting to overspend this year by £11·5 million. It estimates that £6·6 million of that is underfunding of inflation. The total inflation shortfall borne by that region since 1983-84 is about £32 million. However, it does not stop there and the authority is already estimating a shortage of £4·58 million for next year. Bloomsbury's plan of action includes the closure of wards and of accident and emergency units, other reductions in patient services and the freezing of vacancies—in an area that has vacancies of 13 per cent. and encompasses a 50 per cent. staffing deficiency in its pharmaceutical department.

I draw to the Minister's attention the appalling plight of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly area health authority which, as a result of a likely overspend of £1·2 million, has taken emergency action and closed the Bolitho maternity unit in Penzance and the Falmouth hospital casualty department, and has halted its car service. Ministers in London are unlikely to appreciate that such a service is vital to a rural area such as Cornwall.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in a rural area such as that of the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly health authority, sadly the problems of transporting patients are not reflected at present in the RAWP formula, which does not take sufficient account of rural scatter?

Mr. Fearn: I agree that that service is sadly underestimated, especially in London.

I reiterate the case of the Birmingham community health council. It estimates that it has been underfunded by the Government to the tune of £17 million in the years 1982-83 to 1986-87. Even taking 1986-87 as the year on which calculations are based, it will need a further £10 million in the present year to reinstate the level of service to what it was at the beginning of the current year. It too has a long list of cuts and closures across all services, including the non-removal of asbestos from Highcroft hospital and the degrading position of being able to supply only one bath per week for the elderly in the North health authority. Indeed, there is not a health authority in the country that is not now feeling the pinch. We hear of possible closures of maternity wards as far apart as Penzance and Alnwick, with expectant mothers facing the prospect of travelling between 30 and 50 miles before they can give birth. Cancer units are being closed and bed capacity is being reduced.

We all recognise the plight of kidney patients at Queen Elizabeth hospital and their "right to life" petition—a problem that is repeated across the country. However, what of those patients about whom we do not hear so much? A consultant at the once prestigious Royal Victoria infirmary in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has had to defer operating on a patient with an aortic aneurysm and has sent him home to Berwick where there are no major surgery facilities. That deferral was because four of the beds in use in the intensive care unit are full and the other four beds are closed through lack of staff. If the patient is operated on now, he will have a 90 per cent. chance of survival. As the consultant concerned has pointed out, the NHS has already spent £2,500 on this patient, before surgery. The loss from three or four similar cases would pay for one ICU nurse for one year.

We should also consider the quality of care of the patients who do get a bed. A recent victim of a heart attack, a single working mother, left her own sick bed in a London hospital to feed and tend two elderly and confused patients with whom she shared a ward. She found their constant cries for help stressful and difficult to cope with. She could not do anything to relieve the discomfort when those incontinent patients were left unchanged for eight hours. They had been in the hospital for six months, waiting to be cared for in the community.

The hard-worked and dedicated staff were as stressed as the other patient with their inability to administer as their training and will dictated. The same single mother was discharged from her bed, which was immediately filled by another emergency case. The discharged patient had to wait three hours for her medication and then make her own way home. It is no wonder that the acute services in London are being utilised more than was envisaged. I guarantee that much of that increase is from the readmission of patients who do not fully recover because of the throughput pressure and lack of adequate care while in our hospitals.

We read yesterday in the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General that our operating theatres are under-utilised by as much as 40 or 50 per cent. due to staffing, communication and information deficiencies. We know that every region is suffering from lack of staff in both the administrative and caring sectors of hospitals but, due to financial difficulties, health authorities are freezing vacancies.

Hospitals are faced with two problems. First, they cannot attract staff because of low pay, low morale and poor conditions, which will be made even worse by the threat to link the clinical grading structure to special payments. Secondly, even if they could attract staff, they would not be able to pay their salaries because of the Government's policy of not fully funding pay awards. It is ridiculous that hard-pressed health authorities must pay for agency nursing.

It is obvious to all that the Government do not value the NHS. They treat it as a necessary evil and that atmosphere filters through the entire system. The nursing profession has lost its value and status and can no longer attract the recruits that it requires. The dedication of the current staff is rewarded with more and more pressure. Nurses constantly work under stress and in a crisis. Our junior doctors work long and hard hours, which raises the risk to patients. An average working week for junior doctors is 86 hours and some work for as many as 100 hours.

The Government say that they believe in community care, but they have not provided the funds to ensure that that programme can be carried out. When long-stay hospitals are run down, to be replaced by community care services, there is a transfer of funds from the hospital to the care services. However, hospitals need to maintain a full range of services during the interim period. The Government should have provided bridging funds, on top of development additions.

Social services are already under great pressure. However, as a result of Government cuts, they are finding themselves even more hard-pushed with the consequence that many beds in hospitals are blocked by patients who should be cared for in the community. We must call a halt to this state of affairs. It is time that the Government recognised that the savings from cost-improvement schemes have outlived their usefulness. Indeed, 1986-87 was probably the last year when any region could make savings without reducing services.

It is time that the Government withdrew their constraints on pay in the NHS so that the standard of living of the staff no longer fell behind the private sector. They must ensure the supply and training of all staff, particularly nurses, to the best advantage. We must improve our position in the league table of health expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product. Other countries spend more per head without wrecking their economies. Why not us?

It is time that the Government converted to a full-hearted support of the NHS and committed themselves to a cash increase per year representing 2 per cent. real growth. It is time that they recognised that there is a consensus of public opinion to improve the Health Service. All it requires is the political will to provide a reasonable growth of resources for the NHS within the limits of growth of the national real economy.

With the advance of medical and scientific techniques, public expectations have grown. They are difficult to meet, but we can certainly go a long way to fulfilling those expectations if we have the will to do so. As a nation, we do not have the right to call ourselves prosperous until we can provide a service that ensures the health and welfare of our citizens.

6.21 pm

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): If the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) will forgive me, I will not dwell at length on his speech. However, it is difficult to take political will seriously when it comes from the party that many of us remember in the Lib-Lab pact. That pact sustained a Government that cut nurses' pay. Therefore, I do not believe that we will take many lectures from that quarter about what needs to be done.

I congratulate the Minister on making the valid point that we have had some definite successes regarding spending, recruitment and building within the NHS. It is important to get the gripes that have been paraded by Opposition Members in a highly emotional manner—that is all right—into context. The level of under-funding in the west midlands—I shall come to the point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) later—is £11 million in the current year. Over the past four years it has totalled £30 million. However, those figures compare with a budget for this year of £1,100 million. For Opposition Members, with their record, to suggest that they would have done better is ludicrous to those of us who were present when they were last in government. We remember what they did to nurses' pay and the hospital building programme. The situation was reached when porters were deciding who was to be admitted to hospital and the dead were left unburied —*[Interruption.]* Oh yes! We know what their care of the NHS meant and we will not let them forget it.

What is so despicable about the manner in which Opposition Members have paraded their emotional concern is the fact that they have not addressed any of the real issues. It was left to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) to provide some analysis of what is going on in the Health Service and where further consideration must be given. I shall also try to provide such an analysis.

We must recognise the fact that there is a serious decline in the morale of those who work in the NHS. That lack of morale has been communicated to patients and their relatives. It has also manifested itself in some perfectly disgraceful examples of unprofessional conduct by consultants—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on!"] Yes, I am going to say it—who have been parading their patients on television and splattering cases all over the newspapers. What about patient confidentiality? What about the best interests of the patient?

Mr. Galbraith: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Miller: No, I will not give way. I have plenty to say.

We remember those doctors who, when the limited drugs list came in, put wrappers round the pill boxes and said, "You will not be able to get this under this Government". That was an absolute tissue of lies—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes! This disgraceful behaviour from people in the medical profession is a manifestation of the low morale that they feel——

Mr. Galbraith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Miller: No; I am making a fair point.

They feel that they have been driven to such excess lengths, but that has caused great concern to many of their colleagues who have behaved with what they consider to be greater restraint.

We must consider how consultant contracts are held and their responsibilities. I am not shirking from a fundamental re-examination of the NHS. One of the matters that I would like examined is the appointment of consultants. How are their contracts to be held, and how are they to perform their duties to their patients?

I agree with much of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth. I will not elaborate further on under-funding except to point out that, although the Autumn Statement gave the promise of extra resources for the NHS, it has been estimated that my health district will incur a penalty of £400,000. That will be a further pinch on resources in that health district next year as a result of previous under-funding of £300,000.

When our economy is recovering—I am glad to say that the economy of the west midlands is also recovering—it is difficult for people to accept that it is not possible to fund fully pay awards and to meet prices. In the west midlands we are facing great difficulties—again, let it be noted, arising from success—with the capital programme. Because that programme overspent and was over-successful, we are now running into difficulties regarding the burdens on the recurrent programme. I wish that the Government would pay attention to the suggestions put forward by the West Midlands regional health authority for helping to alleviate those capital difficulties, whether by sale or lease back, contract hire or joint venture. They are all short-term, defined objectives designed to reduce running costs. If the Health Service is being told all the time to run itself more efficiently and more commercially, surely the Treasury should permit it to adopt commercial measures to reach those objectives.

Let us consider priorities, a matter that has not been properly considered. Reference has been made to robbing Peter to pay Paul, and there must be a re-examination of priorities within the NHS. How is it that the family practitioner service is not subject to cash limits but acute hospital services are? I cannot tell when I will run under a bus or when I will have a serious disease requiring hospital admission.

I cannot see the basis for the distinction between family practitioners and hospital consultants, except from the experience of the Opposition's National Health Act 1975 and the superior political muscle of the general practitioners. It is time that that was re-examined. In the Autumn Statement, it is significant that proportionately greater funds were given to the family practitioner service than to the acute hospital services. That is what I mean by the need for a fresh look at the priorities within the National Health Service.

I cannot excuse my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) for announcing the priority for smears but not providing funds. Attempts to meet those priorities in our health district will be at the expense of mental patients, who were supposed to be helped under the community development programme. Ministers understandably have priorities but, while it is acceptable that they may wish to change them, time has to be allowed for those changes to take effect. Ministers have to give consideration to funding new commitments. Could we not have had a clearer decision from the Department about the validity of DHSS payments to patients in homes? In my own district, there is an unexpected additional cost burden of £150,000 per year.

Many people feel that they are unable to influence decisions made by the NHS and that those decisions are made solely by the medical profession. It could almost be described as a restrictive practice. For example, there is now a proposal to appoint three extra consultants when we cannot even afford the ones that we have. How are we supposed to finance three additional consultants? Of course, that proposal was made by the Royal College of Surgeons. I will not absolve the Minister, because that was also partly in response to the Government's proposal to provide better promotional prospects for junior doctors. Again, the proposal was not funded.

Mrs. Currie: It was.

Mr. Miller: Those funds have not yet percolated through to the Bromsgrove and Redditch health district.

One should not overlook the opening of the new Alexandra hospital at a cost of some £27 million. It has treated 4,000 more in-patients and 8,000 more out-patients. It has a striking record, for which tribute should be paid to all concerned. However, it has sucked funds out of the rest of the health district. Hilltop hospital is to close. We are to lose our casualty service even though specific assurances were given by Ministers that it would be retained and additional funds provided for its maintenance. Those funds have been sucked into the new general hospital without regard to the efficacy and the level at which casualty services should be provided, which is why I question the decision-making process. I believe that my hon. Friend the Health Minister has experienced the closure of a cottage hospital in his own health district. Minor casualties can be treated more effectively, quickly and satisfactorily at such a hospital than at a district hospital that is further away and where the patients occupy expensive and valuable time. How are those matters to be properly examined, and how are the people to have an input into decision making?

The record of the Government in the Health Service is one of success. It is at the margin that we are discussing improvements, the reassessment of priorities and the decision-making process. The correct strategy should be to build on the success that the Government have achieved. There is widespread public support, which I share, for additional funding for the NHS, whether by way of tax, charge, insurance or fee. We have to look at additional sources of finance because the Government are concerned to protect and promote the National Health Service, and that is the wish of our constituents.

6.36 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech and to refer to my predecessor, George Park, who commanded the respect of the Chamber and of his constituents. I seem fated to dog his footsteps as I was elected to the seat that he vacated on Coventry city council when he was elected to the House. A similar sequence of events determined that I follow him to the House. On each occasion I have been proud to follow him, but the last occasion is the most daunting. His industry and commitment have presented me with the most difficult task of emulating his parliamentary record of excellence. He held office from 1974 until 1987 and performed that 13 years of service with good will, which endeared him to all hon. Members. It is a tribute that all hon. Members have requested me to convey their best wishes to him on his retirement.

During those 13 years, tremendous changes have taken place in my constituency and the city of Coventry. Since 1979, 62,000 jobs have been lost. Prestigious car manufacturers have been erased from the industrial scene. The site of the Morris engine factory is now a heap of rubble. Alfred Herbert and Webster Bennett, machine tool manufacturers of world repute, are derelict and boarded up. The car manufacturers such as Triumph, Rover, Climax and Standard—companies that were previously a magnet for Britain's unemployed—are now famous only as collectors' items. That is the sorry state of affairs in my constituency. Unemployment is 28 per cent. in the Foleshill ward.

The unacceptable levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation mean greater health risks. As winter approaches, those health risks have been compounded because the inhumane privatised gas board has, without compunction, cut off gas to low-income families. In my constituency the standard of health care is alarmingly low and ordinary people's lives are at risk.

Against that background, there are further health cuts and the closure of a further four wards in local hospitals, with the loss of 82 beds. The Coventry local medical committee forecasts that those circumstances could lead to an outbreak of winter illnesses or infectious diseases which doctors and nurses would be unable to cope with. I can add to that the proposed closure of the Coventry Whitley hospital that is located on a prime city site. The hospital was previously scheduled for expansion. It is dear to Coventry citizens and served by the most dedicated staff of doctors and nurses who, with unions across the city and the three Coventry Labour Members of Parliament, are determined that the hospital will not be handed over to a private housing association. They are determined to resist the handover which is solely attributable to under-funding. That under-funding is having a most horrendous effect on the Coventry and west midlands health service.

The most serious health problems will not be solved because a Member of Parliament intervenes, for example, to save a child's life which ironically was put at risk by the cuts that the Minister supported. Cuts have led to the cancellation of 33 child heart surgery operations at the Birmingham Children's hospital during September and October.

Nothing is sacrosanct and the midlands and Coventry are not unique. In my short time in the House I have heard other hon. Members describe mirror circumstances. The same soul-searching problems occur in constituency after constituency. There are hospital closures and huge waiting lists for all kinds of medical care. In every constitutency the blame is attributed to under-funding. Doctors and nurses the length and breadth of the country are speaking out and hon. Member after hon. Member, day after day, is pointing to the under-funding. Thousands of people are waiting for renal treatment, hip operations and prostate gland operations.

Why are the Government not aware of what is happening? They have listened to Members making these points eloquently, logically and passionately. Obviously eloquence and logic have failed to distract the Government from their uncaring policies. They have an Edgar Allan Poe mentality. They relish the pain that their policies inflict and their policies are physically brutal. I have sat in the House and wondered how to break through that callous barrier.

How can we communicate with people who treat the Health Service like a huge supermarket? How can the Government understand the problems of the elderly whose supply of incontinence pads has been halved? How can the Government fail to understand the lives led by elderly people in their homes where they are constrained by low incomes and experience major difficulties coping with problems of incontinency? What was a home with friends becomes a lonely hell when the smell of urine, which is actuely embarrassing, forces the elderly to close their doors to visitors. No economic argument can sustain or validate those circumstances.

An understanding of the problem will not be gained in a private hospital. The problem will not go away because an Under-Secretary of State, cavorting in a track suit in a gymnasium before the television cameras, advises the elderly to take up jogging. The problem will go away only when she gets rid of her track suit and puts on an incontinence pad saturated with urine and sits down for a couple of hours in a cold room in conditions conducive to hypothermia. Perhaps then the message will get through to the parts of the body which other messages fail to reach. I venture to suggest that that is an educational method from which all hon. Members could learn.

I have been in touch with members of Birmingham city council this morning. Because of their concern at the low standard of care in the midlands, they have gone on record calling for the Government to maintain, increase and improve the Health Service in the midlands. They have also expressed their most serious concern for the children waiting for cardiac treatment at the Birmingham Children's hospital. To reach a solution to that problem, they are inviting the Secretary of State for Social Services, the Under-Secretary of State responsible for hospital services and every hon. Member between Stoke-on-Trent and Stratford to attend a meeting in the Birmingham city council chamber. I anticipate that questions will be asked at that meeting which will be posed from other areas of concern. The questions might include, do Members of Parliament accept that kidney consultants should have been told to send persons home to die? Do they accept that 40 per cent. of cancer treatment beds should be cut? Do they accept that 500 patients should wait two years for prostate gland operations?

Finally, I want to refer to a letter from Baron Beaumont, the chairman of the Queen Elizabeth hospital kidney patients association. He poses a question for all midlands Members:

[Mr. John Hughes]

"As an MP, you represent the patients in the West Midlands who are suffering from this extreme under-funding of the NHS. Please will you let us know exactly what steps you will take to insist that the Government takes urgent steps to improve the situation?"

I want to put it on record that if I fail to improve the position by the ritualistic debating process of this House, I am physically prepared to make my presence felt in this House.

6.46 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): It falls to me to congratulate the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) on the confident way in which he spoke to the House. I am sure that all hon. Members will look forward to hearing from him again. The Conservative Members who will speak in this debate have something in common with the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East as we face cuts in the hospital services in our constituencies. Indeed, I will refer shortly to the closing of a ward. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East referred to engineering. As chairman of the all-party engineering development group, I hope that I will recruit the hon. Gentleman.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health was right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that we are spending considerably more on the Health Service than ever before and to underline the importance of the fact that next year we will find £700 million more to be spent on the hospital services. I stress that the regional health authority in my constituency has been given 5 per cent. more this year and help towards nurses' pay. I want to ensure that my district health authority receives a fair share of that increase, but I am in a dilemma, because I am not satisfied with the administration of my district health authority, and the way in which it chooses its priorities.

It was right for my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) to refer to priorities. If we are not to receive the funds until next year, we must examine the way in which the district authorities administer the districts. I do not believe that we are getting value for money from the way in which my district authority is spending its budget. In that context I want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister about the £6·5 million new hospital in my constituency. I apologise to the House for referring to what may appear to be a constituency interest, but this has caused great feeling in my constituency.

I have always regarded a new hospital on which £6·5 million has been spent as a community hospital. However, the closure of a casualty ward and the recent closure of the children's ward have turned the hospital into one for elderly people. It is no longer a balanced community hospital.

The move led to a public meeting of protest held a few weeks ago and attended by 700 people and to a petition carrying 17,000 signatures. Last week 3,000 people marched through the streets of Clacton in protest. At the public meeting I pledged that I would do my best to ensure that the hospital remained a community hospital and to prevent the closure of the casualty and children's wards. I have received more than 1,000 letters supporting my action and protesting against the health authority's action.

It is difficult to be rational in such circumstances. Most of us take the view that no country can ever have enough money to spend on its health service. However, it is our task as hon. Members to ensure that we get our priorities right and that we get value for money from the enormous sums that we spend on the Health Service, which increase each year as our national wealth increases. The Prime Minister's amendment underlines that.

In our system, the battle for the right priorities is largely between the regional and district health authorities. I realised that in my area of North-East Essex there would be a hard battle between the health authority region and district this year and that the Secretary of State, too, would be involved, especially as there were signs that the region was not passing to the district some of the increases that had been received from the Government.

I arranged a meeting of the district health authorities and local hon. Members, who included the Leader of the House and the Minister for Health. It was agreed at that meeting, which was held in mid-October, that before any action was taken by the authority, consultations would take place with the chairman of the North-East Essex regional health authority and the Secretary of State—especially in view of what the district had told us about the difficulties.

I am sure that the House will understand my concern. Before we had time to begin the consultations, I heard of a notice to close the children's ward in Clacton hospital at once and of plans to take action that would have led to the closing of the casualty department. That led to an early-day motion tabled by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) who did not consult me as the local hon. Member.

The undemocratic and dictatorial attitude of the health authority, which broke the agreement made with me at the meeting in the Lord Privy Seal's rooms, angered me immensely, as I realised what the consequence would be. The results of that action were the public meeting attended by 700 people, the petition carrying 17,000 signatures of local people, the march of 3,000 people last Saturday and the 1,000 letters that I have received. I knew that that would follow the high-handed action of the health authority.

People have regarded the manner in which the closures have been conducted as a sinister move to get round the clear procedures laid down for ward and hospital closures, which call for public consultation followed by the approval of the closure by the Secretary of State. By far the most sinister aspect of the closures of the children's and casualty wards is the unscrupulous way in which the health authority has closed the facilities without giving any notice to patients or staff. Staff returning from holiday found that they had no ward in which to work. They feel that the health authority's action was a blatant attempt to get round processes laid down by law and to present the closures as an accomplished fact. That is why I ask the Minister at least to instruct the health authorities to re-open the closed services immediately so that the consultation procedure can be fully completed. Surely a democratic process is one that can be seen to be a democratic process.

I have received very few letters asking for more money. Those who have written to me have been almost united in their view that the health authorities have got their priorities wrong. General practitioners and other doctors despair because no consultations are taking place. The big

issues involved are overcentralisation and the conversion of a £6·5 million community hospital into a hospital for the old.

Is it right that a casualty ward that dealt with 22,118 patients between 1 October 1986 and 30 September 1987 should be closed, so that patients have to be treated at a hospital 18 miles away and face the hazards of winter weather and summer traffic jams? The same applies to patients of the children's ward, except that many parents are not well off and do not have cars. Two years ago the health authority agreed to keep the children's ward as a special case. Why has it changed its view now, when the population of the area has increased?

In 1986 the Clacton casualty ward cost £227,000, which is £106,000 less than the cost of the geriatric ward. In the three or four weeks since the decision was made, the cost to the ambulance service has been £18,000 extra. At a conservative estimate that amounts to about £187,000 a year.

I make this challenge to ensure that we get value for money. At the moment, we do not get value for money because the priorities are wrong. I ask the Minister to order an inquiry into the administration of the North-East Essex health authority. There has been no consultation with doctors. I only wish some of the administrators in the health authorities would talk to some of the very practical general practitioners who have to deal with patients and are in the front line in dealing with problems. The health authority is working a policy of centralisation and shows no understanding of its effects on a district such as Clacton, with a population of 50,000, which becomes 150,000 in the summer.

I am determined to keep the Clacton hospital as a community hospital. I know that it would be easy for me to press the Government for more money. However, we should first examine whether we can get money out of more efficiency in the North-East Essex health authority. We must ensure that we get our priorities right. We must consult the experts and general practitioners more. If we can get the money by savings—I believe that we can—we shall be able to save the community hospital. If not, we shall have to press for other means. I hope that we can achieve our aim by savings.

6.58 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am in the enviable position of congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) who is just leaving the Chamber to take his repast. I shall do so with relish. My hon. Friend rightly paid tribute to his predecessor Mr. George Park. I had the privilege of having the desk adjoining George Park's desk in the dreaded cloisters for about four years. My hon. Friend rightly expressed pride at following in Mr. Park's footsteps. Having followed the pertinence of my hon. Friend's logic and the confidence of his presentation, I can assure him that in my position Mr. Park would be expressing a similar pride in his performance. We all look forward to further contributions from him.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), the Minister said that the Northern regional health authority was boasting about its additional resources. I hope that the Under-Secretary is listening carefully, because she may have to qualify that claim.

On Monday I applied for an emergency debate under Standing Order No. 20 on bed closures and the reduction of operating theatre sessions. I was unsuccessful, but, perhaps as a direct result of that attempt, I received a letter from the community health council which said:

"Last Thursday the District Nursing Officer and the District General Manager announced the closure of 2 elderly care wards,"—

this is in a modern hospital—

"in addition to 44 surgical beds. In the case of the former, we are in a position in North Tees where we have a 25 per cent. reduction in beds available to care for the elderly and in the latter a reduction in surgical beds will inevitably lead to high waiting lists. I should point out that in the case of the waiting lists, orthopaedic and gynaecology are beginning to increase prior to the announcement of the closure of surgical beds. This, unfortunately, is only the beginning of a proposed series of closures and bed reductions. Whilst we may have difficulties in staffing these wards, I have a suspicion that there is a financial connection that needs to be investigated here."

The Minister has already said that he is good at investigations, so we shall see.

The letter goes on:

"I don't wish to be alarmist, but the situation in North Tees is deteriorating rapidly. We have only one District General Hospital in North Tees, and I am told by Dr. Gibbins, Consultant Physician with special responsibility for the care of the elderly, that his service has been set back 20 years. In 1967 he could make more beds available to patients than he can today. The point to bear in mind here is this, the elderly and their relatives in North Tees are now faced with the prospect of no relief due to sickness or dementia, etc. There will no longer be any emergency admissions or weekend relief, services which are normally made available to the elderly."

This is not the ghost of Christmas past, but the actuality of Christmas present. The evidence demonstrating that the Health Service is not safe in the Government's hands is incontrovertible. The House, and indeed the nation, has been subjected to a barrage of culpable misinformation and deliberate inaccuracies on the state of Britain's Health Service.

However, rather than engage in shallow rhetoric about the Government's record on the Health Service, I should prefer to have the facts of the matter examined in detail and placed on the record for the nation to make its own judgment, free from misleading party political propaganda.

I should like hon. Members on both sides of the House to consider the position of North Tees district health authority as an example of an authority which has striven over a number of years to maintain a high level of service to its people.

I should like hon. Members to take particular note of the fact that, although North Tees district health authority is one of the smallest in England and Wales—but by no means the least important—it has proved itself time and again to be most efficient and cost-effective, at least until recent times when the full effects of the Government's hidden agenda for the Health Service forced the authority to reduce its services to patients and thereby directly and, sadly, adversely affect the standards of patient care. The medical, administrative, clerical, paramedical, and, indeed, every other category of staff within North Tees have striven strenuously to follow to the letter and the spirit the principles and practices on which the Health Service was founded. For those with short memories, or, indeed, for those who no longer care, I want to remind the House of those principles and practices.

[Mr. Frank Cook]

The Health Service was established in the first instance to ensure that everyone in the country, irrespective of means or age, of sex or occupation, should have equal opportunity to benefit from the best and most up-to-date medical and allied services available. Secondly, the Health Service was created to provide, for all in need, a comprehensive service covering every branch of medical and allied activity, from the care of minor ailments to major medicine and surgery, to include the care of mental as well as physical health, with all specialist services, for example, for tuberculosis, cancer, infectious diseases, for maternity, fracture and orthopaedic treatment, and many others. It was also intended to include all normal general services—for example, the family doctor, midwife and nursing provision, care of teeth and eyes, the day-to-day care of the child, and all necessary drugs and medicines and a wide range of appliances.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the Health Service was created to divorce health care from personal means or other factors irrelevant to health considerations; to provide the service free of charge and to encourage a new attitude to health. Those principles comprise two components, one of which, no doubt, has given rise to the Government's determination not only to undermine the principles to which I have referred but to create an agenda —a grand plan—for the gradual dismantling of the Health Service as we know it.

The first component to which I refer is a medical one. It was the express wish of the founders of the Health Service to take medicine out of the market place and to elevate it to a social service in which the skilled doctor could apply all professional knowledge and expertise to the care of the individual patient and the community without any deference to squalid cost factors or the financial or social standing of the sick person requiring attention.

For the doctor who had any sense of vocation, any true calling, that was liberation—a great freedom, far above all other freedoms to which we might aspire. It was a freedom that places the physician or surgeon, the nurse or auxiliary—indeed, anyone associated with the direct care of patients—in a unique position, exceeded only perhaps by their unique role in matters of life and death.

The second component to which I refer is a political one. That involves placing on a Minister for Health, answerable to Parliament, and, through Parliament, to the people, responsibility for the quantity and quality of services being supplied. It was to be comprehensive and available to all citizens, and so, by implication, adequate in scope and of top quality. It was to provide for the prevention of disease, for the treatment of all diseases, for rehabilitation and for the education of people on health matters. It was to be paid for out of general national income.

The National Health Service Act 1977 embodies the principles and components to which I have referred to the extent that it is the Secretary of State's duty to continue the promotion in England and Wales of a comprehensive Health Service, designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the British people, and in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, and for that purpose to provide or secure the effective provision of services in accordance with the Act. Moreover, the services so provided shall be free of charge. The remainder of the Act sets out the Secretary of State's duty regarding the nature of the provision of services throughout England and Wales.

However, what is the reality in relation to the principles which should influence the provision of resources for the NHS, the most essential of our social services? Although what I am about to say on the plight of my health authority could be echoed by any hon. Member about their health authorities, I suggest that the position in North Tees is not only a measure of the disastrous effects of the Government's policies on the NHS, but an accurate indicator of the eventual and intended fate of the NHS under the Government.

I say that, because North Tees has always conscientiously and diligently carried out its role and responsibilities in relation to national, local and regional policy, whether in the area of financial management or the delivery of services to the community. Let me cite a few of the authority's valiant efforts to protect and maintain its services, notwithstanding the cumulative devastation visited on it by the Government's policies on health care. Prior to the diktats of successive Conservative Ministers for Health, North Tees tried for many years to make efficiency savings. When cost-improvement programmes were imposed from on high, North Tees had already made effective efforts in that direction. North Tees has saved many millions of pounds by its measures and there is no room for more savings.

The consequences of the district health authority's past efficiency has in some respects been its undoing. Another area in which North Tees district health authority has excelled is in piloting certain schemes on behalf of the Department. North Tees has had a pioneering role in management budgeting. It was one of the four pilot sites in Britain to formulate and implement management budgeting programmes. Its efforts were so successful that it has been used as a model for other districts and regions in England and Wales to aspire to.

Along with 15 other districts in the region, North Tees assisted the regional health authority in piloting performance indicators. Whatever hon. Members may think of performance indicators, North Tees has skilfully utilised the data that has been generated as a means of comparing its performance with that of other districts within its own region and nationally. North Tees was also involved in piloting some earlier elements of the Köner initiative, especially in paramedical data.

North Tees district health authority and its surgeons made valiant efforts for several years to reduce its waiting list and increase its throughput of patients, long before that approach became the flavour of the month with the Government. It did that without extra financial assistance. Paradoxically and ironically, those districts that have been less efficient and have been unable to reduce their waiting lists have received financial help.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not very selfish for hon. Members to read long and boring speeches when many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may refresh his memory from notes. I repeat my earlier plea for brevity. As I have mentioned to the House, nearly 40 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, and

many of them will be disappointed. Long speeches are made only at the expense of the rights of other hon. Members.

Mr. Cook: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the advice that you offered to the House. I would point out that I would have got much further into my speech had the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) not had the effrontery to try to impose his efforts on an Opposition day.

All the achievements to which I referred occurred despite a reduction in the growth of money and despite an indication by the region that North Tees will move steadily away from its resource allocation working party target over the remainder of the strategic planning period.

It should be remembered that the number of operations performed is a direct result of an increase in the number of references made by general practitioners to the specialists in North Tees. Furthermore, the health authority's effort to maintain an even keel financially has been jeopardised by the effect of inflation on prices during the current and forthcoming financial years.

I should like to give the House the figures on that effect. The result of all the efforts and initiatives by the North Tees district health authority has been quite simply that it has worked itself into the ground and into debt, trying to fulfil its obligations to the community it serves. Its shortfunding for pay awards for 1986-87 totalled £172,000. The 1987-88 review body pay award shortfunding comes to £136,000. The 1987-88 non-review body pay award shortfunding comes to £117,000. Its prices shortfunding totals £100,000. Its development programme is costing £150,000. Its cost-improvement programmes for 1986-87 will total £170,000 and non-recurring commitments total £70,000, which leave the health authority facing a deficit of £575,000 by the end of the financial year.

I fail to understand why Conservative Members find that amusing. It does not need a dinky whizz-kid from the City to appreciate the fact that providing a service in an efficient manner requires appropriate funding. Furthermore, we should all remember that it is the National Health Service — the Health Service of the nation—and not a profit-making business. It requires at least sufficient funding to cover the costs it incurs.

I have a lot more that I could say, but would like to leave you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with one particular health case, which starts like this:

"But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'"

That is the beginning of the parable of the Good Samaritan. I will not take up the time of the House by reading it all; I will read just the end of it where Jesus said:

"'Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

That was 2,000 years ago. We in the post-war Labour party thought that society had advanced since then. Since 1979 we have seen the clock turned back atrociously, but we are ready to put the record right when we return to power.

7.15 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I listened with care to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), and now I feel that I know a great deal more about North Tees than I did not so long ago.

I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate, because this is the first time in four and a half years that I have had the chance to speak in the House on the National Health Service. Having served as a Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment when he was responsible for the DHSS in the last Parliament, I listened to countless debates in the manner required of all Parliamentary Private Secretaries, with an almost Trappist bearing. I say "almost" because it is not always possible for even the most assiduous of PPSs to refrain from the occasional sedentary intervention.

I can think of occasions in the last Parliament, when exchanges between my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) reached their liveliest, when intervening was a temptation that one could not resist. It is an instructive experience and I am grateful for it. Certainly there was ample scope for learning about the National Health Service and hearing conflicting views. It is an intensely complex subject about which feelings run high. From all the discussions and debates that I heard, my impression was that four unassailable truths, four facts of life, emerged time and again.

The first is that the National Health Service has become a constant political battleground, very much to the detriment of all involved — practitioners and patients alike. The reasons for keeping up the barrage of Left-wing criticism is only partially connected with the current condition of the Health Service.

The second fact of life is that the Government have made remarkable progress over the past eight years in patient care, health standards, medical technology and hospital building. Such progress could not have been contemplated in the late 1970s under the Labour Government.

Thirdly, in spite of all that progress, and notwithstanding yesterday's welcome statement, a great deal remains to be done if the vast NHS organisation is to work cohesively and effectively for the benefit of all its patients. Challenges still exist in long waiting lists and the demand for new equipment and greater numbers of skilled staff. Of course, there is still inexorable pressure on health authority budgets.

The fourth fact of life is that the solution to the financial challenges that remain cannot be solved by efficiency initiatives alone, although yesterday's announcement of so many enterprising new measures will undoubtedly help. Nor is it likely that the problems will be solved simply by increasing the funding assumption made by the Treasury of the inflationary cost plus an additional margin. Above all, they will never be solved by the economics advocated in the last Parliament by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

I recall that in one week the hon. Gentleman boasted that he would see additional funds of £500 million put into the Health Service and virtually in the same breath he said that he would abolish pay beds and prescription charges and would bring in a minimum wage in the National Health Service. In other words, in that same week, virtually in the same breath, he had spent the £500 million or more. So much for Labour economics for the National Health Service.

The subject is a battleground. I suspect that the reason is that Socialists recognise that the realities of responsible government, when they had their opportunity, have clashed with their idealised notions——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Wardle: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak.

The Labour party's idealised image of the Health Service has clashed with the reality of responsible government. It was a landmark achievement by the Attlee Government to create the Health Service, but that same Government had to introduce charges. The Wilson Government promised to abolish prescription charges, did so, and then had to do a humiliating U-turn. Under the 1974-79 Labour Government we saw an axed hospital programme, the pay of nurses falling behind inflation and waiting lists going up. They could not even manage the economy to provide the resources that were so necessary. By contrast, this Government have a formidable record of achievement. The sum of £21 billion is being spent on the National Health Service——

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Wardle: I had hoped that by now the hon. Gentleman would have taken the hint that I have no intention of giving way. He will have his opportunity if he lets me get on.

Let me continue with the Government's record. It is one of cuts in administration, more being spent on patient care, competitive tendering producing £100 million of savings, the bold initiative of the selective list of drugs, nurses' pay up by 30 per cent. in real terms, more nurses, more midwives, more doctors, more dentists, 200 major hospital building projects begun and completed by the Government, 6 million more patients—day-care patients, in-patients and out-patients—than eight years ago, an initiative on general management within the Health Service, and, above all, the sound management——

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Wardle —of an economy which creates the means by which the Government can afford to care. What the Opposition always choose to forget is that if they do not manage the economy sufficiently well they cannot create the means by which they can afford to care. That is always the missing part of the equation.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) has made it clear that he is not prepared to give way. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) must not persist.

Mr. Wardle: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Lest the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has not got the message, let me say that I do not intend to give way to him.

Yesterday's proposals are important, not simply because of the £150 million of savings to be generated in the current year, but because of the spirit of enterprise and competition that will be encouraged within the medical world. Hospitals will be able to subcontract more of their facilities and deal more with the private medical sector. Where does the pressure on finance come from? It comes from more new medical technology and ever higher standards of treatment, with more and more general practitioners referring more and more patients for cataract operations, hip replacements and so on.

However, there is no escaping the fact that district health authorities are underfunded. There are problems because of the RAWP formula in South West Thames. *[Interruption.]* Yes, I acknowledged it earlier and I repeat it. A classic example is the Eastbourne district health authority. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition may laugh, but there has been a 30 per cent. increase in population in Eastbourne, with an above average increase among the over-85s. Yet Eastbourne remains at the bottom of the RAWP league table in South West Thames.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Does that not indicate that there is something wrong with the RAWP system?

Mr. Wardle: Yes. I have long said that there is something wrong with the RAWP system. If my hon. Friend will wait for a moment, he will hear my recommendations on that.

Radical changes are required in the Health Service. They go beyond the call by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) for increased funding from the Treasury. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will consider carefully further innovations in the economic framework in which the Health Service operates and also an increase in the freedom of health authority managers to manage.

Because of the constraints upon time, I shall list just a few examples. I hope that my hon. Friends will establish the freedom beyond all dispute of health authorities to go outside their geographical areas for patients and to compete to fill odd corners of their capacity, thereby taking the pressure off waiting lists elsewhere. I hope that health authorities will be able to build up their own units of specialised excellence and sell them beyond their boundaries. I hope that they will be able to subcontract yet more work to private hospitals when it is effective to do so and when it will reduce waiting lists. I hope that small community hospitals will be considered for joint ventures with the private medical sector. When a community hospital is faced with closure—perhaps when a new district general hospital is coming on stream—and the option to keep it open is at the expense of other priorities, why not consider the possibility of forming a charitable trust, possibly with the local League of Friends, and sharing services between the NHS and private medicine? The NHS might perhaps deal with geriatric beds, GP beds and out-patients, and the private sector with surgery.

Of fundamental importance, however, is my hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the coming months to give tax relief on health insurance, thereby moving more patients willingly into the private sector. That would leave intact the vital principle of the Health Service, which is the provision of free health care for everyone who needs it.

I also hope that my hon. Friends will bear management freedom in mind. It would be no bad thing if they and DHSS officials could persuade themselves to stand back from the NHS supervisory and management boards, set clear objectives and then allow first-class managers to manage. Perhaps one day they will consider abolishing regional health authorities and having fewer, larger health authorities. Perhaps in the course of their management review they will consider introducing serious five-year contracts for consultants, with a review after four years, and a one-year roll-over basis. I notice that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), who is a member of the medical profession, is nodding agreement with that idea.

I hope that my hon. Friends will grasp the nettle and consider forming a separate health authority for the London teaching hospitals, so that the accounting of those hospitals can be examined in a straightforward fashion. If they feel sufficiently radical at some stage, they might even contemplate privatising one of the teaching hospitals so that it can be funded in the way in which some outstanding hospitals in the United States are funded. That would be no bad thing, either.

Those are just a few of the remedies that I hope my hon. Friends will consider and pursue in the course of time, in spite of the political excitement to which some of the remedies will give rise. The Government's record in health care is excellent. They have won many battles on behalf of the National Health Service. If they are to win the war, they will have to be still more radical, so that progress can continue on an accelerated basis.

7.29 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I was rather surprised by the speech of the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle). He started by saying that he did not like the Health Service being a political football, and then went on to make a superficial, fractious and highly political speech. One reason why the Health Service is a political issue is that when the Labour Government tried to introduce it in 1945 it was bitterly opposed by Conservative Members.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): That is not true.

Mr. Galbraith: I do not pretend to have all the answers to the problems of the Health Service. Indeed, I agree with the Minister's remarks about the difficulties that it faces. There are priorities to be assessed, and if spending was open-ended there would be no limit to the demand. I agree with all of that. However, we must try to decide how best to achieve those priorities. We believe that the National Health Service is the best way of deciding and funding them, and that is why we are here to defend it today.

Most of us use the National Health Service constantly, which is why we speak with some generosity of spirit and sincerity. I hope that Conservative Members will accept that that is so. We have heard great claims from the Government about how much more funding is going into the Health Service, but we must be careful about their figures. We should try to relate funding to the real world. We must test our own experiences and adopt an empirical approach.

If one asks people throughout the country, one finds that they agree that the National Health Service has deteriorated significantly since 1979. In my area, hospitals and beds have been closed and patients have come for operations and been turned away. Why are we so surprised about the recent case when such things go on every week? Only last weekend a consultant colleague of mine told me that, on average, he turns away five cases a week. My own hospital is only 10 years old, yet the linoleum is held down with Elastoplast. When I was looking for another important piece of equipment, I could obtain the money for it only from charity. But the National Health Service was set up so that we would not have to rely on charity for care.

How do these experiences equate with the Government's claims and figures? Why do they tell us that everything is improving when the rest of us know that everything is going downhill? It is what is known as the electric brae phenomenon — as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) knows; the electric brae is in his constituency. It is no good merely looking blandly at the figures and the increases — they must be corrected in several ways. The way to correct National Health Service figures is by means of the deflator of NHS pay and prices, not by using any other deflator. Once the figures are corrected in that way, the increase for 1981 was 1 per cent.; for 1981-82, 3·2 per cent.; for 1982-83, 1·4 per cent.; for 1983-84, 0·7 per cent.; and the percentages for the succeeding years were 1·3, 0·1, 1·2 and 0·4. According to that deflator, it is projected that the next two years will show a decrease of 2 to 3 per cent. That explains the problem. The use of the correct deflator shows that the increase over the past years has been running at about, if not just under, 1 per cent.

I am sure that the Minister will admit that 1 per cent. is needed merely to cope with demographic changes — people are getting older, and so on. It is true that we can now treat more elderly people, and it costs 10 times more to treat someone over the age of 65 than someone under that age. So we need that 1 per cent. just to stand still. We need another 1 per cent. for the increase in technology about which all hon. Members have spoken. I used to do an operation that one could do with a simple glass suction apparatus. It cost very little. Along came a thing called the ultrasonic scalpel. It cost £60,000, and every time I use it, it costs £500. I am not doing anything more — I am doing the same thing, but because of the increased technology it costs much more to perform.

Another increase is necessary for new development. We can sometimes find money for new developments such as the treatment for AIDS or heart transplants, as long as they are high profile activities, although the money generally comes from other parts of the Health Service. However, many other new developments are never carried out because they do not have a high profile, so we do not spend enough on them. Take, for example, the rehabilitation service in the west of Scotland, an area that looks after 2·7 million people, and that has no rehabilitation unit. One has been on the cards for four or five years, but the prospect of obtaining money for it is nil. As a result, people leave the unit in which I used to work after extensive operations without rehabilitation — so their recovery is delayed, if not permanently impaired.

People do not die as a result of the things that I am discussing, but there is no question but that the quality and length of their lives is severely affected. One might say that I am being partisan and I can accept that criticism.

Two important things that were a great surprise to me happened in this decade and they should make us wonder if what I am saying is correct. The first concerns the British Medical Association. As we know, the BMA is not a hot-bed of militant Marxism. It has a record of rolling over every time the Government speak to it. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) does not remember the 1970s and the behaviour of the British Medical Association at that time. This decade the BMA found it necessary to go to the Government and tell them that the Health Service was inadequate and that it required more funding. That was from a body that used to to give unequivocal support to this Government.

Most hon. Members know that the General Medical Council is the body that disciplines doctors, but it has other roles. It has an important role in overseeing and

[Mr. Galbraith]

determining standards in medical education. When I went to a council meeting last year, much to my surprise I saw a minute from the education committee. The heading on it said:

"The standards of and resources for medical education".

The minute read:

"the Committee reported to the Council its serious concern at reports from medical schools that reductions in funding of universities and financial constraints within the National Health Service are endangering standards of medical education. The Committee proposed to draw its concern to the attention of the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health and Social Security . . ."

That is unheard of for the General Medical Council, which is an apolitical body.

Mr. Whitney: Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that the British Medical Association did not have disputes with Aneurin Bevan, Richard Crossman, Barbara Castle and Lord Ennals, as he now is?

Mr. Galbraith: It most certainly did, but it was always over pay and the fact that it was not enough. Some hon. Members will remember the disputes that it had with Harold Wilson when he cut the review body recommendation. Apart from last year, this Government have cut that recommendation every year since they came to power in 1979.

I know that many hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall not continue for much longer. I had hoped to talk about the way forward because there is no point in just pointing out what has been wrong. It is important that we put forward ideas on how to improve the Health Service, its efficiency, its delivery and its care. We also need ideas on how we can use our operating theatres to better advantage, and that was highlighted in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report. We also need ideas on how to increase throughput and cut waiting lists. I shall return on another occasion to these matters because I intend to be an MP for a long time.

Any improvement in efficiency and in the delivery of care will require extra resources. Money is not the only thing that is required in the Health Service, but it is a necessary condition. Although current funding has been increased under the Government, the increase has barely been enough to cope with the demographic changes, and certainly not enough to cope with new technology and further developments. I urge the Government to look again at the funding of the Health Service and significantly to increase it in future years.

7.38 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The Opposition seek to paint a picture of the Government that would make Scrooge look like Father Christmas. They accuse the Government of hard-heartedness and meanness and of wanting to get rid of the National Health Service. Charges are flying as fast as Indian arrows at Custer's last stand. However, their charges simply do not stick. The enormous extra funding of the National Health Service outlined by the Minister and the undeniable truth that many more patients are being treated in many specialties are absolutely clear and on the record. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should stop muttering and listen. I could then get on with my speech more quickly.

There is not a Birmingham MP—and possibly few others—who does not have cause for concern about the present state of the National Health Service. We know that waiting lists for cancer therapy at the Queen Elizabeth hospital are now up to eight weeks. That is hard for a cancer patient to face. We know that the number of renal patients is restricted and some cannot be treated at the moment. We know about widespread ward closures and of operations cancelled, sometimes at the door of the operating theatre.

Baby Barber received a lot of publicity and some people will think that because of that he had his operation and now has his life. However, there are scores or hundreds of unsung and unreported baby Barbers. I was told recently about a little girl of nine who was born with heart problems and who had her operation cancelled five times. On one occasion this little soul had had the pre-med injection but woke up to be told, obviously by a worried and embarrassed nurse, that she had not had the operation and would have to go through the preliminaries again. Things like that concern us greatly.

On the matter of nurses, I do not think that it is just a question of nurses' salary. There is also the matter of morale which falls when hospitals are badly decorated or not repaired as they should be. Those things have a lot to do with nurses' morale. Of course it is true that the Government are pumping more and more money into the NHS all the time. There can be no fair charge of meanness and no just charge that the Government do not care about the Health Service. Despite the £21,000 million—that is a great deal of money—that is spent every year, the problems to which I have alluded exist and are getting worse.

The problems have arisen not because the Government have not been generous with money, but because doctors are able to cure or to treat medical conditions from which only a couple of years ago the patient would have died. That is wonderful and we are all delighted at the expertise that our doctors are now showing. Unfortunately, the ability to carry out a new operation does not automatically carry with it a flood of gold from somewhere to pay for all the extra expense involved in carrying out that operation. That is the difficulty. We are the victims of our own success.

Even bearing in mind all those circumstances, I am afraid that it is just not good enough for the Government to say that hospitals must work within their financial limits. The public will not accept doctors saying to patients, "Yes, old man, I can treat you and I know how to treat you. I know that I can make you better or control your illness, but I am sorry, I am afraid that you will have to go home and die or wait because we do not have the money to treat you. Health authorities, you see, have to live within their budgets." That is simply not acceptable. We must face the fact that the money has to come. I appreciate what has been said about the open-ended character of treatment nowadays and one knows the difficulties that that creates.

Hon. Members could stay here all night giving examples of difficult NHS problems in their constituencies. Finally, it all comes down to money. We must have far more money than the amount that is required just to keep up with medical expertise. That is because more people are getting into the older age group and AIDS will cost an enormous amount. I do not think that it has yet been quantified. It looms ahead as a terrifying input to the health budget.

Bearing all those matters in mind, the time has come for radical change to obtain extra money for the National Health Service. People are ready, willing and able to pay more. Often that has not been true in the public sector, but it is now; people are willing to pay more.

Two points must be made about the beginnings of the National Health Service. At that time it was a much poorer service in terms of its ability to treat; we now have many more expert doctors and more treatments. On the other hand, there are more richer people in Britain. In 1948 one did not often see two cars in the family garage or a family taking holidays abroad, but one does today.

It is a better service today, and because people are better able to pay, I hope that the Government will seize the hour and announce new methods for obtaining new resources. One may ask, "What new methods?" Earlier, the possibility of the Chancellor forgetting about tax cuts, leaving levels of taxation as they are and giving extra money to the Health Service was raised. I agree that that is an attractive argument and many people support it. Unfortunately, if we did that, nurses — who are the people about whom we are most concerned — would have to pay the same amount of tax as they do at present, which they strongly resent. Nurses have to pay tax—the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) shakes his head; perhaps he does not know any nurses — but the point with regard to tax cuts is that we want to exclude poorer people, and nurses are in that group, from paying tax.

I tabled a parliamentary question to my hon. Friend the Minister about whether he would consider alternative methods of funding. The answer was a bit disappointing. He said:

"Health Authorities are already encouraged to dispose of surplus land and buildings, and such sales are currently releasing some £200 million a year".

That money is welcome, but the land around a hospital can be sold only once. Once one has the money from that sale that is the end of the source. I am asking for continuous sources of funds.

One matter that has concerned the hospital boards is that the money from such sales does not go to the hospital concerned, but gets lost in a vast budget somewhere outside.

I well remember the Labour Government pushing through an Act against private medicine. They were determined to get rid of private beds and I remember the cancer consultant at the Queen Elizabeth hospital bewailing the fact that he would lose money for his cancer unit when all the private beds went from the hospital. When we look back on the Labour party's management of the Health Service we remember some pretty grim problems.

My hon. Friend's answer continued:

"We shall also be encouraging them to seek ways of generating extra revenue from the non-National Health Service use of appropriate facilities, such as selling refreshments to visitors and advertising."

I do not believe that that will bring in nearly enough money. One cannot pay a bill of billions of pounds by selling buns.

Should we make more economies? To their credit, the Government have made many economies within the National Health Service; much money has been saved, particularly in Birmingham. The Government are proud of some of the ways in which they have been able to increase efficiency and stop waste. I do not think that there is a lot more money to be gained in that way.

I do not think, as some people do, that we shall solve the problems of the costs of the Health Service by making more economies in administration. I was interested to see the report of the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales, which pointed out that theft in the Health Service is a serious problem. Millions of pounds simply walk away from the Health Service kitchens, wards and stockrooms in the loss of sheets, pillowcases and nightgowns, which cost the National Health Service a great deal. I have even heard of sides of bacon disappearing. Labour Members doubtless think that it is a little perk of the Health Service to be able to take a pack of butter, or something like that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: That report was not made by me or my hon. Friends; it is an independent report that points to the amount of money that is lost through theft.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No. I am trying to be quick.

Even doctors working in the hospital do not have a very good idea of how much money they want. Reference has already been made to the letter from 200 consultants in the Birmingham health district. It says:

"The Government must be persuaded that the Health Service can only be safe with a modest increase in the level of funding."

We do not need a modest increase; we need hundreds of millions of pounds. However, the doctors do not think so, unless they call hundreds of millions of pounds a modest increase.

Should we consider other means of fund raising, such as a lottery? One travels all around the world and finds old ladies selling lottery tickets in the streets. I am told that it raises quite a lot of money; certainly there is a lot of support for it. I suggested such a scheme in a newspaper recently and I have been deluged by letters strongly supporting it.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No, I am trying to keep within my time.

In many countries charges of a hotel character are made for hospital beds, and that is a possibility which we should consider. There should always be exemptions for people who cannot afford to pay charges, but we must eat whether we are in hospital or not, so I cannot see anything wrong in charging for food when someone is in hospital.

We could bring back the almoner and the matron—hospitals ran better when we had them. If we brought back the almoner, realistic hospital charges could be made. We could have a tax-related payment for treatment, which has been advocated in various publications. We could — I am very drawn to this suggestion — have a new stamp especially for health care. Currently, the stamp is universal and covers pensions, benefits, supplementary benefits, disablement benefit and a little for the Health Service. We should have a special stamp for health care alone, and all the revenue from that stamp should go to health care. I do not think that the public would object to that, and I think that it would be a good idea.

[Dame Jill Knight]

I have tried to outline a number of ways in which money can be obtained for the Health Service, bearing in mind that we are talking about billions of pounds and not peanuts. We must have money available to meet our immediate needs. The cases of people who cannot receive treatment worry us very much.

I beg the Government to look at the problems of extra funding in the long term. I ask them to provide more money to meet the agonies of decision that are facing our doctors and nurses in our hospitals.

7.54 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I sympathise with the Secretary of State, who is not able to be here, and wish him a speedy recovery. Along with the Minister for Health, the right hon. Gentleman has provided a little relief for Birmingham. We were grateful —although he will understand that we were critical—for that small amount of relief.

I did not agree with all the fund-raising schemes that were mentioned by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Egbaston (Dame J. Knight). In my many years' association with the Health Service I have certainly not met any Birmingham chefs who have been stealing sides of bacon.

The right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) made a helpful and constructive speech. We should acknowledge it. Although hon. Members are critical, it does us no good to get into the trenches of old, worn-out political dogma, and that is where we have landed ourselves for much of the debate.

I raise a fundamental right—the right of a patient to live. It arises from the decision of the Master of the Rolls in the High Court yesterday. The Government's move towards a corporate state—that is what they are doing in education, local government, health and, I am sorry to say, sport — is one cause of our problems. We have heard from hon. Members from all over the country about the terrible concern of regional authorities and district hospitals which cannot meet their obligations. Not one regional chairman has thought it right to resign. One of the reasons is that the Government's placemen and placewomen now abound. I do not object to people being paid for their services, but, having served as chairman of a hospital for 16 years and never having charged a penny for having done so, I believe that the present movement reacts against the public interest and should be examined.

One of the unfortunate developments in the debate has been the pernicious attacks on consultants who, in the absence of their authority chairmen, have thought it right to stand up for their health authority. We have heard about the threat from the Secretary of State for the Environment. In a brilliant speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) mentioned the threat that was made to a Birmingham consultant.

We heard demands from the hon. Members for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) and for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) for shorter consultant contracts. Their views were couched in language that suggested that people who had the audacity to put their public duty and their Christian conscience, as they saw it, before any bureaucratic convenience might be got rid of, written to or threatened. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will take the opportunity to denounce that and declare total freedom for consultants to bring such matters into the public domain.

I pay tribute to the consultants in Birmingham. The hon. Member for Edgbaston and I have led delegations to them. I pay tribute also to the hon. Lady and her colleagues. We in Birmingham have been united in trying to stand up for our constituents' interests. None of us would have harangued Ministers had consultants not brought those matters to our attention. More consultants told us "We are being ordered not to treat patients who will die if we do not do so." Thank God they did so. They were carrying out their duties as civilised members of society, not just as doctors or administrators. We must take account of that fact.

All hon. Members delight in the success of the operation that was carried out on the girl who has been mentioned several times today. The other child, who was mentioned by the hon. Lady, happens to come from my constituency. I shall not go over that ground again. After four or five cancellations of a hole-in-the-heart operation, it was appalling for that girl, even after a pre-med, to find that the operation had been cancelled. This is happening all the time. It is an appalling blot on our society.

Twelve months ago my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill and I went to see the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority about problems at the East Birmingham hospital, which serves my constituency and those of other hon. Members. He explained the terrible growing financial crisis. He horrified me when he said to us, as Members of Parliament, "I have to tell you that there will be deaths." I cannot think of anything more catastrophic than for a Member of Parliament to be told by a regional chairman that because we are overspent and £30 million over-committed, there will be deaths.

I praised the chairman for his honesty, and I do so again tonight, but it raises the question whether the citizen has the right to live. At the end of the day, that is what the debate is about. I give all the credit that the Government want for increased expenditure, and increased staffing levels and activity in hospital out-patients' and in-patients' departments, but that is all totally irrelevant if one is about to die or if a consultant says, "You will die unless I operate on you next week, and I have been instructed not to do so."

What is the legal position of any administrator or chairman of a local health authority who instructs a consultant not to carry out an operation when he is willing to do it and when the necessary equipment exists? In my judgment, if that patient dies, it amounts to unlawful killing.

The orthopaedic case involving our former colleague David Ennals was fairly raised. The same point was raised in the courts yesterday in a case concerning Angela Tongue. She came to see me in the first instance because she needed dialysis and kidney treatment. The consultant had been instructed not to admit her or anybody else. It was quite clear that she was going to die. I saw the consultant in Birmingham this morning, and he told me that she was admitted literally at the forty-fifth minute of the eleventh hour. She was admitted because, first, 10 Birmingham hon. Members complained bitterly, and, secondly — I ask the Minister to comment on this — because the legal officer of the regional health authority

advised the chairman, who was still standing firm, that the case would be indefensible in law if the girl were not admitted and she died. That is true.

Yesterday, in the Court of Appeal, the Master of the Rolls, in rejecting the case of the young lady whom I have mentioned, Angela Tongue, said that the basis of his rejection was that

"financial resources were finite and always would be."

According to today's edition of *The Times*, he went on to say:

"Other circumstances might arise where it would be appropriate, but if the court did entertain an application further resources would be expended by the NHS in meeting the complaints. There was therefore a very delicate balance to be struck."

In 33 years, I have never criticised the judgment of the House, but the Master of the Rolls held the balance and decided that an individual's right to live was inferior to the right to support the bureaucracy in not providing the funds to enable a person to live. That cannot be a tenable proposition, and I hope that the courts will think again. The Master of the Rolls admits that the court had jurisdiction and that, in another case, he might make a different decision. I do not know where he might find a more serious case than that of David Barber, or a lady who is told that she will be dead if she is not admitted to hospital.

I agree with what the Medical Defence Union has said. A legal opinion appeared in *The Lancet* when the previous matter arose. In response to my letter the Secretary of State courteously wrote to me drawing my attention to the Hinkes case — the orthopaedic case. No reasonable Member would ever say that the right to go to hospital and demand treatment for a hip operation was commensurate with the right to live. It is, of course, very distressing for people who need hip operations and are in terrible pain, but that is nowhere near as serious as the plight of people who are told that they will be dead next week unless they have an operation.

I raised the point, as a layman, with Sir James Ackers nearly 12 months ago and again with the Minister. I think that I am absolutely right. Let me say to the Master of the Rolls, and to the Minister that we are not dealing with the civil law. If anyone in my constituency dies as a result of medical neglect because a consultant has been ordered not to treat him, I shall regard it as a criminal matter. There will have to be a coroner's inquest and a police investigation. I think that the legal adviser from the West Midlands regional health authority was right to say, in the case of Angela Tongue, that it would be indefensible in law if she was prevented from having treatment that was available to her.

Mr. Lofthouse: May I mention a case in my constituency? The health authority decided to spend the allocation allowed to it to shorten waiting lists in a private hospital that would cover 302 operations, rather than in the National Health Service, where the same amount of money would have covered some 660 operations. If one of 360 people waiting for operations died as a result of such a decision, would the same apply?

Mr. Howell: Everyone has the right to live, and anyone who brings about a death commits an offence under the criminal law. I see no distinction between telling a consultant not to allow someone to live by admitting that person to his ward, and an ambulance driver being told not to take to hospital someone who has been knocked down in the street. We all have a duty to go to the aid of a fellow citizen in such circumstances.

I think that we need a right-to-live Bill, and, if I have the good fortune to be able to introduce a private Member's Bill, I shall try to bring one in. If the Master of the Rolls' decision is interpreted to mean that no one has the right to make demands on the National Health Service, even in extremis, when he is likely to die unless help is provided, that is not a position that a civilised Parliament could allow to continue. It must be put right, and I hope that the Government will put it right.

I join those who say that we want money immediately, and I hope that even at this late hour the Under-Secretary of State will announce the provision of that money, particularly for the Central Birmingham health authority. When I intervened in the Minister's speech, I said that 90 children's beds had been closed; in fact, the figure is 104. At the Queen Elizabeth hospital, 146 beds have been closed. That has never happened before. I do not want to make a political point: I am merely saying that it has not happened before in our administrative history.

On behalf of the doctors, I express admiration for the emergency action taken by the Minister to provide £225,000 to keep the kidney unit open, despite the Under-Secretary saying on television that there was no more money. I am glad that there have been second thoughts, but what will happen after the money runs out on 31 March? Surely none of us wants to return to the days of deputations and all the television dramas that we experienced. Can the Under-Secretary give us an undertaking tonight that next year's financing will be sufficient to keep open the vital cancer and kidney units? At the Children's hospital, paediatric skin services are now facing a grave crisis. I was told about that in a letter that I received today.

This problem does not affect only babies with a hole in the heart. It applies to all specialties because of the regional significance of teaching hospitals. We need emergency money now. There would be unity across the Floor of the Chamber if the Minister announced that she would provide it, and it would ensure that such traumas never face us again in the National Health Service, which we all cherish so much.

A consultant, while talking to me the other day about Ministers, said, "Why is there no compassion in the Health Service?" I had to tell him, with the greatest regret, that under the present Government compassion does not have a price. That is why it is not relevant to the thinking of administrators in our Health Service today.

8.11 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I am told that there is a thin line between bravery and foolhardiness and that occasionally, by accident, it is possible to slip across that line. Tonight the Opposition have not merely slipped over the line; they have charged across it.

I would have welcomed a constructive debate on the future of the National Health Service. No one wishes to try to avoid or hide the difficulties that lie ahead. I fear, however, that I found the faintly sanctimonious approach of Opposition Members very upsetting, and the mesmeric effect of the Opposition Dispatch Box still seems to be working. None of the lessons of the last period of government seem to have got through. Every time in the

[Mr. Richard Page]

last Parliament that an Opposition spokesman put his hand on the Dispatch Box, he was promising that the Labour party would spend more money. It reached the point where they were promising to spend billions of pounds more. Halfway through the last Parliament, they were going to spend £17 billion on health and housing. No wonder that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) must have breathed a sigh of relief when Labour lost the election, for Labour could not possibly have raised the money to pay for all those promises.

However, I would accept all that if Opposition Members had a shining example to set before us. Let us look at their record. I vividly remember my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister coming to the Dispatch Box a couple of years ago and quoting an excerpt from the diary of Barbara Castle — which, by a lucky chance, I have before me now. It ran:

> "All things bright and beautiful
> All projects great and small
> All things wise and wonderful
> Denis Healey cuts them all.
> Healey cuts the old age pension
> Although he cuts by stealth
> And when he looks for savings
> Healey cuts the National Health."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 20.]

He jolly well did, twice. That is why I find it rather upsetting to receive a lecture about how dreadful Conservative Members are when we have increased NHS expenditure by 32 per cent.

If anyone visits my constituency and walks a few hundred yards to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), he will see a brand new hospital, opened last year by Princess Michael of Kent. It cost some £18 million and has 367 beds. At the western end of my constituency, a few hundred yards into Hemel Hempstead, we come to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones). There we find the Tudor wing, a £8 million project. That was cancelled under the Labour party but built under the Conservative party. That is the difference. When my constituents visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West, who I see in the Chamber, they see the physical results of the Conservative party's support for the NHS as opposed to the cancelled projects of the Labour party.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to draw attention to the fact that not only is there a new hospital project in Hemel Hempstead and further projects in the pipeline, but there are 25 per cent. more nurses than when the Labour party left office.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend has made the point for me and I appreciate what he said.

I should like to be a little more practical and talk about obtaining value from the NHS. We must deal with the question of finance. I am afraid that I find great similarity between the NHS and the escalating cost of military hardware. Decades ago the treatment was an aspirin and a lot of TLC. But now with new drugs and fantastic surgery techniques we can save lives which were previously lost. However, the cost is escalating.

I have to say to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister who will be replying to the debate that I am convinced that whatever sums of money we give the NHS, within a few months there will be a requirement for even more. The problems that we would solve today would be back with us within a year and, therefore, I believe we have to take up the message given to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight).

We have to look at all forms of revenue that can be employed to support the Health Service. If that means charging, lotteries, insurance policies or giving tax rebates for insurance policies for health, so be it. We have to look at the whole question in a new and open fashion and not assume that we can just overcome the problem with a few more pounds. We have put billions more pounds into the NHS, but we still face problems.

I should now like to raise queries about finance under the present system as it operates locally. My constituency covers two district health authorities, South-West Hertfordshire and North-West Hertfordshire. Both my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, West and for Watford are involved in these queries and concerned. In those two districts we face the problems of success. In the South-West Hertfordshire district health authority over the past three years the number of treatments in hospital, not including out-patients, has increased by 32 per cent. That is a fantastic improvement. The cost per case has come down from £748 to £737. In North-West Hertfordshire district the cost of a bed is £726. That is the standard charge for every patient admitted to hospital. There has been a huge increase in the number of treatments and that position has been reached simply through efficiency. However, it cannot be sustained if the funding mechanism within the North-West Thames regional health authority takes two years to recognise those facts and arrange the necessary transfer of resources.

It would be invidious of me to start naming the London hospitals that make up the North-West Thames region along with my hospitals. However, the cost per case in one of the London hospitals is £1,121. In another hospital the cost is £1,160 and in another it is £1,198. A couple of hospitals can do it cheaply and manage £843 per case or £867. It means the hospitals on the borders of my constituency in Watford and Hemel Hempstead make a saving per case of between £100 and £400.

In some of the hospitals in London the deaths and discharges have gone down. However, in my region they have gone up by 9 per cent. I know that there is a changing pattern of treatment. The people in my constituency no longer have to go to London for their operations. They are having their operations locally, and very successfully too. The situation is self-explanatory. On behalf of myself and my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, West and for Watford, I ask the Minister to look at the problem. It cannot be right for the hospitals in my district to be held back while the London hospitals some 20 miles away sort themselves out.

I know that a deputation is going to see the Minister and that it will include my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, West and for Watford and myself. I hope that at that time some solutions will be put forward to solve the dilemma.

I should like to deal with the effective use of operating theatres. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)

tended to leave the impression with the House that the under-utilisation was due to a lack of resources. I should like to point out that in 1981 the Duthie report, which dealt with the use of operating theatres, said:

"we are in no doubt that poor management of waiting lists, inefficient admission and discharge planning and the lack of co-ordination of aftercare facilities exacerbate the problem and lead to waste of the resources which are available".

Those are almost the same words as those in the report of the National Audit Office.

One of the sentences near the end of the National Audit Office report says that computers are not being used for the admission process. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make every effort to see that hospitals the length and breadth of the country introduce computerisation at a faster rate because that is the only way that we will obtain more efficient use of the resources within the Health Service. It would also reduce the frustration felt by so many people who have turned up for treatment and been turned away or who have had to wait a considerable time.

I should like to talk about other areas in which I think that the Health Service could save money and where it could provide extra resources for more treatment. I was hoping to spend some time going through the savings that could be made from tendering for support services. Already £100 million has been saved and I believe that it has been estimated that another £50 million could be saved if all the health regions employed competitive tendering. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to do what she can to ensure that all regions take full advantage of the competitive tendering process.

I should like to have developed my speech on the requirements for efficiency and saving, but I am aware that many right hon. and hon. Members want to speak. Therefore, I shall draw my remarks to a close. If we strip away all the political froth from the debate we all accept that there will never be enough money for the Health Service. That has been proved by the fact that we have provided a vast increase of over 30 per cent. in real terms but it is still not enough. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to look at every available source from which more money can be raised to provide the health care that the country wants.

There have been vast increases in funding and in hospital treatments and that has created a good base on which we can build an even better Health Service. The Government should be congratulated, not castigated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The House will wish to know that the winding up speeches are expected to begin at about 9.20 am. Time is short and many hon. Members wish to speak. I hope that those who are fortunate enough to be called will bear in mind that many others hope to catch my eye later.

8.24 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Most hon. Members who have spoken, with the exception of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) who seemed to me to be rather blinkered, have considered the issues that affect patient care in their constituencies and home areas. I should like to do that later, but I wish to start by considering an issue that has not been touched on so far and I have sat here throughout the debate. That is the way in which the financial situation in the National Health Service is leading certain district health authorities to bring in questionable practices in their catering.

Most hon. Members will recall what happened at Stanley Royd hospital in Wakefield in 1984. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) lost a member of his family when 19 people died from the salmonella outbreak. Following the outbreak there was an investigation and a public inquiry. The committee of inquiry, which reported in January 1986, made one of its central points on page 106 of its report, which stated:

"To state that food should be cooked and served the same day . . . is to state what is or should be obvious to everyone employed in a kitchen".

The following month, Wakefield district health authority decided to introduce a cook-chill system of catering that went totally against the central recommendation of the inquiry. It is my belief—I was at the time a member of the Wakefield district health authority—that the health authority was bounced into its decision to move towards cook-chill by the district general manager, who was new to the appointment and had come into the post direct from the private catering training industry. He argued that savings of about £300,000 per year could be achieved from the system. He had grandiose ideas about outside catering and I am sure that at the back of his mind was the fact that it would be a lot easier to privatise the catering system in due course.

It has since become apparent—this is an important point—that, despite the Stanley Royd experience, the decision to move towards cook-chill was not discussed with the district health authority's control of infection officer, the DHA's control of infection committee or with its own consultant microbiologist, who was involved in the Stanley Royd inquiry, Professor Richard Lacey of Leeds university.

Following the decision to implement cook-chill, the Wakefield district health authority was criticised by a number of individuals and bodies. The London Food Commission issued a report in December 1986 which stated that it was highly critical of the scheme that was to be introduced in Wakefield. Professor Lacey, the microbiologist employed by the health authority, stated publicly that Wakefield's proposals were "microbiologically unsafe and nutritionally unsound" and that they breached DHSS guideliness.

It is also worth noting that in September the Institution of Environmental Health Officers drew attention to its concern about cook-chill systems in various hospitals. According to its report, almost one third of the 127 hospitals using the system were not complying with DHSS guidelines. On 4 November a briefing document from the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales stated:

"New hospital kitchen systems could lead to a catering disaster and it may be just a matter of time before a major food poisoning outbreak occurs . . . The fear must be that under pressure to keep costs down, cook/chill systems will be introduced on the cheap and that sooner or later a catering disaster will occur and lives will be lost through food poisoning outbreaks."

The report suggested:

"Some health authorities are planning to do without adequate reheating facilities on hospital wards".

That is a clear reference to the fact that the likes of Wakefield district health authority plan to cut corners in introducing cook-chill as a means of achieving savings.

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

My central concerns about cook-chill focus on three main points that are relevant to the debate. First, the food that is produced by that process is subject to nutrient loss and, as a consequence, is unsuitable for people who are in hospital, weak, elderly or ill. Secondly, the acceptability of food to the patient is reduced in terms of smell, taste and appearance. Thirdly, there is an increased risk of microbiological contamination during the reheating and holding processes.

It is interesting to note that the critics of cook-chill, especially Professor Lacey, have been subjected to hysterical attack from certain quarters for expressing what I regard as their legitimate concerns. I give as an example an organisation called the Food Hygiene Bureau, a supposedly independent body in which I believe the hon. Members for Upminister (Sir N. Bonsor) and for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) have some interests. On 16 July that organisation held a press briefing at the London Hilton at which it described Professor Lacey's remarks as

"fundamentally incorrect, misleading and scaremongering".

Incidentally, I understand that—surprise, surprise—the meeting at the Hilton was funded by the equipment manufacturers who are promoting cook-chill. Central to my concern about this issue is the fact that vast amounts of money are to be made from cook-chill by private companies which become involved with the privatisation of catering in DHAs and, no doubt, in future in local authorities. Big money can be made from the system.

I refer now to the treatment of Professor Lacey by the Wakefield district health authority and the Yorkshire regional health authority. I hope that the Minister is listening because I shall expect to hear some comments from her. I have tried to raise the subject on several occasions, and she is once again totally ignoring me.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you know, my hon. Friend has sat through the entire debate and has listened to every hon. Member who has spoken, including the speeches from the Dispatch Box. Would it not be a courtesy for the Minister to reciprocate?

Mr. Hinchliffe: The treatment of Professor Lacey by the Wakefield district health authority and the Yorkshire regional health authority has been disgraceful. I shall cite one or two instances of what has happened to this gentleman who raised reasonable criticisms about the system. As a member of Wakefield district health authority, I personally witnessed the tremendous pressure that was placed upon Professor Lacey to withdraw his comments on cook-chill by certain members and officers of the Wakefield district health authority on several occasions. I also personally witnessed on several occasions some highly dubious tactics being employed to discredit Professor Lacey and his views. A private letter that was received from an outside body criticising Professor Lacey's manners was included on the DHA agenda papers by the general manager of Wakefield district health authority, without the knowledge of the district health authority chairman. Surprise surprise, it was included as an item immediately before the subject of cook-chill.

I should mention two other points that are relevant to the situation in Wakefield and to the general situation regarding cook-chill and the current catering pressures. First, during the late summer, Leeds university's nomination for membership of the Wakefield district health authority, Dr. E. G. V. Evans, was rejected by the Yorkshire regional health authority. That was an unprecedented situation. Apparantly, the regional health authority found him unacceptable because he works in Professor Lacey's department.

Secondly and more recently, it has become apparent that Yorkshire regional health authority has excluded Professor Lacey and members of his department from membership of the appointing committee for a new-time post of consultant microbiologist in the Wakefield district health authority, despite the fact that he and his colleagues would normally be involved.

In a letter to me dated 21 October, Professor Lacey states—I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is listening:

> "This is a unique precedent and it does seem the two health authorities are deliberately structuring the Appointing Committee and the membership of Wakefield health authority in order to defend their previous actions. In particular, it is completely unacceptable to engineer an Appointing Committee so that the opinions and attitudes of potential candidates will be consistent with a specific policy . . . I have heard from an authoritative source that any applicant who might be appointed to the Wakefield post must be sympathetic towards the cook/chill proposals."

The Yorkshire regional health authority so-called "expert committee"—it has been referred to nationally—the expert body on cook/chill, was set up during the summer to consider the matter and clear up the difficulties. Without doubt, that committee was designed to smooth the way for the wholesale introduction of that process into NHS hospitals. In common with the appointments committee, that committee did not have anyone on it who was known to be opposed to cook-chill.

The district health authority in Wakefield is pressing ahead with the introduction of a slightly modified cook-chill process which, from the outset, is likely to be in breach of DHSS guidelines. In the light of the Stanley Royd outbreak, the situation that I have outlined gives cause for great concern, especially as Wakefield is likely to privatise its catering services at the same time as it moves to cook-chill.

I smell various rats regarding this matter. I suspect other hon. Members do as well. I have previously raised this issue through parliamentary questions and an early-day motion, but I have had no response from the Minister. I want to know what the Government will do about what the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales described as the possibility of cook-chill becoming "cook-kill."

So far I have concentrated on catering. However, there are wider issues of concern about what is happening as the result of health policies within my district. Wakefield, in common with every other area of the country, has a history of constant cuts and closures. I shall quote one or two, but there are many. Sandal Grange geriatric hospital was closed because it was unsuitable for the care of elderly patients, but, surprise, surprise, it was reopened immediately afterwards for the private care of the elderly. Since then the standard of treatment at the hospital has been a cause of concern to the local authority on several occasions.

Carr Gate hospital, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), served my constituents, and it was closed because it was

considered an isolated institution and unsuitable for the care of patients. However, subsequently it reopened as a private institution. Snapethorpe hospital, the subject of an early-day motion, which is my constituency's most modern hospital, was "temporarily" closed in 1984. One of the reasons given for the closure was that the consultant at the district general hospital, two miles away, found it too far to travel to that hospital. However, I have noticed that quite a number of consultants have been falling over themselves to travel at least three times further to a private hospital within Wakefield to practise outside the NHS.

It is proposed to sell off Snapethorpe hospital, no doubt to the private sector. In my area 100,000 people petitioned to save that hospital. It was totally ignored by the DHA, which I believe is totally unrepresentative of local opinion. It is worth mentioning that one third of the members of Wakefield DHA live in one electoral ward, the only ward in the entire 63 in the Wakefield metropolitan district that continues to elect Conservative councillors. Is it any surprise that only yesterday the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority refused to tell me who nominates the people to that DHA?

Wakefield health authority is currently staggering from one financial crisis to another because of Government underfunding. In April 1987 £1,400,000 was cut, including ward closures and various other reductions in services. On 17 August there was a crisis meeting, and a further package of cuts, bed reductions and ward closures was proposed totalling much more than £1 million.

It is interesting to note that the proposals to make such cuts and closures were seconded by Mr. Graham Bird, a consultant surgeon who operates within Wakefield and who has a large private practice. He also has interests in Methley Park private hospital that has been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford. It could be argued—I certainly argue it—that that consultant stands to gain from bed reductions and longer waiting lists because more people will be forced into the hands of the private sector. Such a situation would never be tolerated within local authorities. It is disgraceful that it is accepted within the NHS.

The minutes of the August meeting report the comments of Mr. John Settle, a consultant representative on the Wakefield DHA. He said that the consultant opinion was that the revenue allocation to the acute unit was inadequate, and that any significant reduction in the service provided would affect morbidity and mortality in Wakefield.

The August package was put on ice after the Yorkshire RHA was embarrassed and intervened. However, in October that package was reintroduced and broadly agreed — the fears of Dr. Settle were realised at the October meeting. I appreciate that we are tight on time, but I wish to go through the package. I have heard the Prime Minister say that RAWP has pushed money into the north, but as a northern Member of Parliament I should like to know where it has gone. Let us consider the package.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order——

Mr. Hinchliffe: If the hon. Gentleman does not want to hear, he can go out.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have been listening to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) for the past 15 minutes — indeed, it seems longer than that. There are many hon. Members on both sides who wish to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. However, I appeal again to any hon. Member who has the Floor to be brief, otherwise many other hon. Members will be disappointed. I hope that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) will come to a quick conclusion.

Mr. Hinchliffe: A few weeks ago I sat here for five hours listening to the health debate, but I did not get called. I have applied for several Adjournment debates on this issue, but have not been granted them. I intend to pursue the matters that I am here to raise on behalf of my constituents.

The closure package included nine beds in a young, disabled unit and two neuro-surgical beds — there is a waiting list of 59 people for such in-patient treatment; the closure of four ophthalmic beds—there is a waiting list of 287; the closure of nine orthopaedic beds — the present waiting list is 376 compared with 260 last year; the closure of four plastic surgery and dental beds — the plastic surgery waiting list stands at 280 compared with 209 a year ago, a 44-week wait for treatment. This is what my constituents experience with the National Health Service.

The orthodontic waiting list is 363 compared with 263 a year ago. Four ear, nose and throat beds have been closed. There are 313 on the waiting list compared with 222 a year ago. Six gynaecology beds have been closed. The waiting list for gynaecological treatment has been of great concern for many years in Wakefield. At present there are 406 on the waiting list compared with 292 a year ago. A geriatric ward, recently upgraded at great expense, is still closed. Further privatisation measures have been included in the package, which, from experience, will drive down the wages of the work force and worsen the conditions that the patients must bear.

The package also includes staff reductions amounting to the equivalent of 57 full-time posts, including 18 nursing jobs. All this is happening at a time, as has been referred to earlier, when the National Audit Office report, which was published this week, specified that Wakefield is using its operating theatres for only 50 per cent. of the time because of staff shortages and underfunding.

The most obscene part of this situation is that under the new Griffiths management structure the general managers on performance-related pay — many of them spivs and cowboys from the private sector with no commitment to the NHS—stand to gain financial bonuses for delivering cuts and closures and damaging the service.

Since my election I have met the chairman of the DHA who told me that there was no more money and that more should be obtained from the RHA. I have met the chairman of the RHA who told me that there was not enough money from the Government. I met the Minister on 14 September and she said that the Wakefield DHA "should be able to manage on its budget." She promised to write to me about bed usage, but I am still waiting to hear.

It is clear that the Wakefield DHA is introducing an unsafe system of catering to assist privatisation and the achievement of savings. The pattern is one of huge increase in waiting lists and massive bed reductions leading, as a consultative representative on the DHA has said, to more

[Mr. Hinchliffe]

people being ill and more people dying. I do not believe that the present situation has been arrived at by accident. I believe that the underfunding of the NHS is deliberate. In my area and elsewhere we are witnessing a deliberate attack on the NHS. This is taking place because the Tory party has never believed in the concept of the NHS. Bed reductions and increased waiting lists push more and more people into the hands of the private sector. It is a deliberate process, actively encouraged by the Government. It is time that the Government owned up to their real intentions —the total destruction of the National Health Service and its replacement with private health schemes. Why do not the Government come clean?

8.44 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): May I first add my voice to those hon. Members who have expressed sympathy to my right Friend the Secretary of State. I wish him a speedy recovery and return to his duties.

One theme that has been generally agreed by hon. Members on both sides of the House is that we should spend more on our health. That is not in contention, and there has even been a good deal of acceptance by Opposition Members that the Government have spent 31 per cent. more and have produced all the results with that spending to which my hon. Friend the Minister for Health referred in his opening remarks. Conservative Members recognise that those results can be achieved only in a strong economy, which the policies of the Government can produce, but which the policies of the Labour party manifestly cannot. The fact that there can be that degree of agreement, yet still the degree of dissension and concern —this has been a troubled and bad-tempered debate—is a measure of the problems that we face.

Another measure of the problem that faces us is international comparisons. This year, thanks to the achievement of the Government, we shall spend per capita £364. The United States, of course, is out of sight, with spending at £1,388 per head. I would not expect to compare our spending with that of the United States, but I would expect us to aspire to a similar level of spending as that of our European partners, particularly France and Germany. France spends £616 per head, and West Germany spends £722 per head.

Mr. Frank Cook: Twice as much.

Mr. Whitney: That is more than twice what we spend, as the hon. Gentleman brilliantly picked up. The difference is that what is spent by this Government is significantly more, as a percentage, than is spent by those other Governments. The difference is the system. We spend 6 per cent. of our GNP while the average of Western countries tends to be about 9 per cent. We have seriously to face that fact with the minimum possible level of political emotion. If we are to move to the 9 per cent. level of our Community partners, we are talking about, not hundreds, but thousands, of millions of pounds. To be precise, if we add together the public and private sector spending, this year it will be £23 billion. If we are to increase that by 50 per cent., which those figures demonstrate is necessary, we are talking of an increase of a further £11 billion.

We have achieved a great deal because, as we sadly know, there are low levels of pay in the Health Service. Those levels are certainly low by international standards, and we benefit from the terrific dedication and commitment of the vast majority of those who work in the Health Service, to whom we all pay tribute. We benefit, too, from the low cost of administration. However, there is no way that we can achieve those modern levels of spending and care at our level of national spending. We have to look at a different system, and it is about time that people had the intellectual courage to recognise that the Bevan proposals were fundamentally and absolutely flawed. Those proposals were for an acute service for post-war Britain, when the social and economic situation was extremely different. We are now faced with three different spending pressures. They are the aging process, high technology and the aspiration of people, which is so strong now and which is showing through in the debate.

Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) who gave us the benefit of his computer print-out, refuse to understand the facts which countless Health Ministers have faced. More than 20 years ago the right hon. Enoch Powell recognised the difficulty and wrote a book about the problem we are now discussing. Richard Crossman wrote in the same vein of the impossibility of the structure to meet our demands. Enoch Powell walked away from the problem and said that to change and reform the system would "daunt the stoutest political heart." It is time that we looked at the problem. We have a long and honourable tradition in this country, and it is rubbish to suggest, as one or two Opposition Members have done, that the Conservative party has never been interested in the National Health Service. That is manifest nonsense.

In 1911 Lloyd George introduced the Liberal National Insurance Act, which we supported. It was opposed by the doctors, but when they discovered that it worked to their advantage, they also supported it. What emerged as the NHS was drafted in 1920 by the committee under Lord Dawson of Penn. The mainstay of the Health Service was the 1944 White Paper under the leadership of the Conservative Health Minister of the wartime coalition Cabinet, Henry Willink. The suggestion that the National Health Service is a Labour party invention in which the Conservative party played no role is absolute nonsense. On the contrary, the shape and structure of the Health Service which eventually emerged, and which I submit is manifestly the wrong one for today, was opposed at the time, not by those in the Conservative party, but by pillars of the Labour party. For example, Herbert Morrison said that Bevan's scheme "would produce bureaucratic overcentralisation". Bevan recognised some of the dangers and said:

> "Admittedly, this is a field in which there is room for development in the techniques of government but the problems that will arise should not be incapable of solution."

Forty years of experience have demonstrated that the problems have proved to be incapable of solution.

Six weeks before Bevan came to the House on 15 February 1946 to give his Second Reading speech ushering in the National Health Service Bill, Herbert Morrison said:

> "The view of the Minister of Health and the Government was that it would not be right to take the hospitals over into a national concern."

I do not make that submission in a party spirit, but to show that it was not a party-political issue at that time.

Another extraordinary phenomenon at the time of the creation of the Bevanite Health Service with which we are

now wrestling was the extraordinary view, shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House, that once we had a working, effective Health Service, the demand for health care would fall. As the right hon. Enoch Powell said, that was a miscalculation of sublime proportions. That is what we have been saddled with.

The nation took a wrong turn in 1946-48, and we have had 40 years of tinkering. I am sorry to say that we had more tinkering yesterday, when it was suggested that we would have income generation of £20 million this year and £70 million later, the one-off sale of real estate to bring in some hundreds of millions of pounds and cross-improvements that would bring in some further hundreds of millions of pounds. However, if we are to get to the international level that the people have a right to expect and to aspire to, we are talking about £10 billion or £11 billion and about a debate on a new system.

For many years my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that the National Health Service is "safe in our hands." As the figures given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health today have shown, it is certainly a great deal safer in our hands than in the hands of any other party. However, it is really safe in no one's hands, for the reasons that I have given. There is a need for a national debate on the matter.

Of course, there will be an outcry from the Neanderthals on the Opposition Benches. The NHS represents all that is left of the mistakes of the Attlee Government. I could recount those mistakes, but time does not permit. There will be an outcry from the spokesmen of the medical profession. There will be no outcry from the real workers, but an outcry from the people who hit the headlines. They objected to the Lloyd George reforms of 1911, but when they discovered that they were in their interest, they became enthusiastic and accepted them. Similarly, they objected to the National Health Service reforms of 1946 until they discovered that they were in their interest, when they became enthusiastic about them. They will object to the new changes——

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Whitney: Certainly not.

There will be objections from the medical profession to new changes, but when they understand how much those changes will benefit the medical and nursing professions, and above all the people of this country——

Mr. Lofthouse: Give way.

Mr. Whitney: No — they will understand that the profession must support those changes. The time has come for courageous and clear thinking. That is what we expect from our Government.

8.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I will be as brief as possible to allow other hon. Members to take part. I hope that *Hansard* can cope with speed writing.

The Government are keen to claim that the Health Service is safe in their hands. I do not believe them. Like many citizens, I am worried about the future provision for the services offered by the NHS which we all take for granted, which it has performed over decades and which every citizen relies on at some stage in his life.

One of the big problems about debating the Health Service is that the debate becomes bedevilled by statistics. It is difficult to compare like with like to understand the existence and nature of cuts or whether we should accept the Government's claim that they are pouring extra money into the service. Year by year, comparisons of NHS costs using different systems of constant prices produce such widely variable results that it is difficult to believe that they are measurements of the same variable. That makes it difficult to reach a logical conclusion about what is happening.

It is, however, clear that from the inception of the NHS in 1948 until 1973 the service received the necessary extra money that it needed — inflation plus 2 per cent. or more. As a result, the NHS was the envy of the world because of its provision for the people. Since 1973 the increases have been inadequate to maintain standards.

Since 1973, the NHS has gradually tightened its belt, made economies and somehow managed to get by. Now, further trimmings are simply impossible. To maintain the service in vital areas, real cuts are being made under this Government, involving closures, sackings and so forth. It must be remembered that that process has been maintained under both Labour and Conservative Governments.

It is worth noting that between 1983 and 1984 there was a 0·7 per cent. fall in the manpower in the Scottish Health Service at a time of a continued increase in workload. Therefore, a greater workload is being borne by fewer people in the service. That is a major problem and we have heard the symptoms described tonight.

The Scottish National party, in common with the great majority of the Scottish people, supports the concept of a comprehensive Health Service of the highest standard financed from general taxation and available to all at the time of need. That is simply not happening now. The best way to discover the truth about what is happening in the Health Service is to look at what is happening in our hospitals. Such an investigation must lead us all to an indictment of Government policy.

We have heard eloquent testimony from Members of all Opposition parties about the problems that are being created. If the Minister for Health does not believe me, I invite him to visit the casualty ward of any hospital on any Saturday night anywhere in the country. He will see the truth then.

Scotland has the worst health record in the whole of Europe. I regret that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is not present, but I know that he will read *Hansard*. He was certainly in the Chamber earlier. In spite of four excellent medical schools in Scotland, the Scottish health record is the worst in western Europe. No matter how much medical care is provided, it cannot counteract the basic problems in our society of social deprivation, poor housing, poverty and unemployment. Until those social issues are tackled, we will never solve the health problem properly.

Mrs. Currie: I was just about to pick up that point. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Scotland has more hospitals, doctors and health spending per head of population than the rest of the United Kingdom. It also has the worst health, with a high incidence of preventable disease, especially heart disease. Does not that show that health spending may have rather less to do with preventing disease than the hon. Gentleman thinks? Perhaps lifestyle, including smoking and drinking, may have something to do with it.

Mr. Welsh: They could be factors, but the basic problem involves finance and the tackling of the more general matters that I mentioned. The Government have signally failed to do that. Indeed, they have exacerbated the problem. Their cuts have had a devastating effect on Scotland. For example, Glasgow was faced with £15 million worth of cuts, which meant the loss of 30 consultants, 70 junior doctors and 500 nurses as well as many other staff. That is the reality of the effects of cuts in services.

It is SNP policy to increase the resources available to the National Health Service by approximately 15 per cent. to bring us into line with other EEC countries—and we heard international comparisons made earlier. If that were done, it would make an enormous difference to the National Health Service, but it is not being done. The United Kingdom falls well below the OECD average for health spending.

Every part of the National Health Service in Scotland is short of money, but in certain parts of the service the problem is acute. Finance is required urgently for geriatric and psycho-geriatric care. We need to provide more hospital beds and staff and to release beds in general wards. However, as an interim measure will the Government immediately consider making extra provision for respite facilities for families who look after such patients? Organisations such as Crossroads do an immense amount of work in providing volunteers and help families and carers enormously. However, National Health Service hospitals can also play a greater part if resources are made available for this important aspect of caring. The Government should consider the matter seriously.

We are far from satisfied with NHS provision. We need action and finance now. We need action on waiting lists. Last year, 80,708 people were on hospital waiting lists in Scotland—a 40 per cent. increase on the 1985 figure. The Government say that there are no cuts and no problems. However, I have a letter from Angus local health council whose experience must be typical of that throughout the country. It states:

"The Council is well acquainted with the cuts in Health Service spending but it is continually informed that patient services have not been affected. However, it has come to light that there is a lack of middle grade support in the Orthopaedic service in Angus which, presumably, has an effect on waiting times and would seem to refute that statement. Angus Local Health Council respectfully requests that Tayside Health Board gives urgent consideration to the employment of a Registrar to assist the Consultant in Angus in an effort to bring waiting times in Orthopaedics down to a tolerable level, thus alleviating the pain, and possible harmful effects of having to take pain-killing drugs over a long period, endured by patients."

That illustrates the reality of the cuts that the Government are imposing on the Health Service.

I appeal to the Government to examine the effects of centralisation policies. It seems that for them a cost accountancy measure is more important than health care. There is an acute problem in the town of Arbroath, and it is a sensitive matter. We have lost our specialist acute services at our hospital and every individual and family in the town is having to pay the price of the decision in travelling and other costs. The burden of the cuts is being borne by individual citizens. I ask the Government to reverse the trend of centralising services in the large cities to ensure that towns and rural areas are not left out as is happening in Grampian and Tayside and other areas of Scotland.

Something must be done about nurses' pay and conditions. We are about 9,000 nurses short in Scotland. A report by the National Audit Office directly blames constraints on finance for that. The report says that in 12 of Scotland's health boards the average number of nurses employed represents only 85 per cent. of the establishment indicated by the Aberdeen formula.

We are fortunate in the dedication and selflessness of the nursing profession, but we have taken that far too much for granted in the conditions of service, pay and opportunities that we offer. Investment in our hospitals' work force is essential and must have greater priority.

Will the Minister comment tonight on the pay, conditions of employment and professional status of medical laboratory services officers and other related staff? That important sector of the NHS must get justice. I hope that the Government will listen to their case and give them the priority that they deserve.

Linked to that problem is the provision of cytology services for cervical cancer screening. In Scotland the screening programme is poorly publicised, inadequately funded and sometimes badly organised. It has managed to keep the incidence of the disease steady over the past 15 years, but some 200 women die annually and some of them could be saved if there were the will and the money to set up an effective screening programme.

Finland has shown that that can be done. In that country 90 per cent. of women between the ages of 30 and 59 are screened and the incidence of cervical cancer has been halved. If Finland can do that, we certainly can.

I wish that the Minister would listen, because I should like her to know that the NHS belongs to the people and its success can be seen in the health and personal welfare of each citizen.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is it not deplorable that, for the second time this evening, the Minister is not listening? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is bad enough for the Scottish people to hear lectures from the Chancellor of the Exchequer without hearing from the hon. Lady? Does he further agree that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs concluded that it cost 20 per cent. more to heat a house in Glasgow than in the Under-Secretary's constituency?

Mr. Welsh: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I speak for the SNP and Plaid Cymru, but I think that I also speak for every Opposition party when I say that we stand by the NHS. Our message to the Government is that no amount of propaganda or excuses will ever substitute for the finance that our NHS needs and it is about time that the Government listened to that message.

9.7 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): The motion underlines the difficulties and challenges faced by the NHS at this time. No one can be unmoved by the stories of unsatisfied need that have appeared in the press. They were rightly headline stories, but headlines can never record the hundreds of thousands of success stories which occur daily in the NHS.

To a great extent, the problems of inner London are the result of the resource allocation working party. Inner London is losing, and, relatively, will continue to lose, resources with the very great strain that such a policy inevitably imposes on planning and service development.

That is the nature of RAWP. As a result, other areas such as that which I represent in Nottinghamshire, which have hitherto been denied their fair share of Health Service resources, have been massive gainers. Of course, we would like more, and, given half a chance, we will lobby, push and shove for more resources. We are still 5 per cent. under our RAWP target, but we have been fortunate.

During the summer, I spent a week visiting the NHS facilities used by my constituents. I cannot think of any other week when I met so many devoted, committed and hard-working individuals. The Health Service is characterised by such people.

Since 1983 the number of doctors in Nottingham has increased by 14 per cent. and waiting lists have been reduced by nearly 30 per cent. There has been exceptional growth in acute services; hardly a month passes by without some new facility coming on stream. There is further evidence of progress, both in priority services and elsewhere, especially in care for the elderly and the mentally handicapped. We are reaping the benefit of RAWP, just as London is feeling the effect of it, yet, compared with my constituents, there is still far more per head spent in London — after allowances for RAWP-determined needs — than in areas such as the Trent region.

I recently completed two and a half years on the Islington health authority. Islington is a heavily RAWPed inner-London district. In the two and a half years that I served on that authority, we had to make some difficult decisions, but Ministers may find a close study of the Islington health authority encouraging. Changing resource allocation has made heavy demands on all who work in the service at every level. I gladly pay tribute to their dedication and hard work.

The authority made a massive saving of £4 million, or 8 per cent. of its total budget, in just over four years. There has been no increase in the waiting lists and the service level has been maintained, although the capacity has been reduced in line with the RAWP requirements. There has been a substantial increase in bed usage. Through competitive tendering there have been no redundancies and more than £250,000 saved in that one district authority alone. At the same time, services have been developed. The much needed colposcopy service, led by Dr. Albert Singer, has come to Islington. The development of Islington's Whittington hospital in three phases—£20 million of major investment in this new district hospital —started only a few days ago. Here, in the heart of London, a heavily RAWPed authority has so far managed to make the necessary structural changes without diminishing its services to the community. That was achieved, at least in part, because Islington has a highly effective and skilled Griffiths management team. Paradoxically, if four years ago the Government had said, "We won't face up to the changes imposed by RAWP in Islington; they are too draconian; we will bail them out and maintain status quo", the service today would be less efficient and more costly than it now is.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Lest the House should be beguiled by that rosy picture of the Islington health authority, perhaps I should say that the Royal Northern hospital will be completely closed over Christmas because of a cash shortage. It is planned to close the building and possibly to sell the site. In addition, the mid-year crisis has resulted in immediate cuts of £200,000 and there is a constant shortage of beds in the Whittington hospital. Islington does not need the Government vaunting the local staff, which I am happy to do also, but it needs cash now.

Mr. Mitchell: I dispute the facts that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has put before the House. I have checked the information carefully with the authority today just in case my memory has deteriorated in the two months since I left. In my view, and in that of other members of the authority, the Royal Northern hospital's acute beds should have been closed before now, and it may be to the detriment of the service overall that they have not been.

I fear that London's regional structure may not prove to be an advantage in future. No matter how skilled and dedicated those who run the four regions may be, the job of the four regional management teams is increasingly an impossible one with lines drawn on maps which make meaningless boundaries.

Notwithstanding the Minister's justifiable alarm at reorganisations, I hope that my hon. Friend will keep under review the possible benefits which may be gained from one London-wide regional authority. I hope that he will also bear in mind the need for incentives, motivation and encouragement for districts such as Islington, which have got on with the job of implementing these difficult structural changes.

The real issue before the Health Service where funds are increasing year by year is not how to persuade the Government to dig deeper into the taxpayer's pocket, but how to get more out of what we are already spending and providing, how to improve the quality of the Health Service and how to deliver a better service for the patient. The demands on the National Health Service are infinite. No matter how much money the Government provide, there will always be good claims for more, and the question is this: how can we improve the quality of the service within the existing growing provisions that we are making?

I suggest three key ways in which to do that: first, by putting a major emphasis on developing the internal market within the National Health Service; second, by throwing away the old shibboleths about the private sector and using it in a far more creative way; and, third, by pursuing vigorously the imaginative and innovative ways forward in the field of preventive medicine. All three ideas are improving and will improve the supply of health care to the patients on a universal basis.

On the first, the development of the internal market, progress in information technology will play a vital part. Much more can be done through the implementation of Dr. Köner's proposals on computerising the service. We have the example from the Radcliffe in Oxford where progress has been made in costing different treatments for similar surgical problems. In adjacent areas there are districts with waiting lists for hip replacements and districts without waiting lists. Adjacent areas have duplicated specialties.

The special fund set up by the Government to channel resources directly into reducing waiting lists has had a beneficial side effect in this respect. Coronary by-pass operations in one London hospital cost £3,700 each; in an adjacent hospital not a mile or so away the cost was just one-third, at £1,300. If we strip away the obvious medical and clinical local interests, is it not self-evidently correct

[Mr. Mitchell]

that if a region calculates that it needs to undertake, say, 2,000 cardiac operations in the following year, it should set in motion an internal tender to assess where such operations could be done most cost effectively? This sort of internal competition must be supported and developed. It cannot be sensible for every district to seek to do everything. Major savings could be made through the development of the internal market in the National Health Service. Such savings would feed through directly to the benefit of patients and of patient care.

The second suggestion that I support is for closer co-operation with the private sector. That means using each other's facilities certainly, but it also means marketing clinical services within the NHS to generate income for patient care. The Secretary of State has already mentioned the use of pathology laboratories as an example. The general manager of City of London and Hackney health authority has demonstrated another way forward. St. Bartholomew's has excellent breast cancer screening facilities. Certain firms have recognised that this service should be provided privately for the convenience of their female staff. Bart's has bid for and won a contract to supply that service. There is already a mammography machine at the hospital which is used by the NHS between 9 o'clock in the morning and 5 o'clock in the evening. The service is now available in the evening to carry out private screening. The depreciation on the machine is minimal. The staff are happy to work and to be reimbursed at overtime rates. Those staff are on low salaries and they benefit from the extra income.

Such additional income generation should be actively encouraged, particularly in London teaching hospitals. The NHS should seek to participate profitably in an expanding private sector. By doing so the service will get the benefits for staff and for patients.

The third way forward is to pursue vigorously the welcome emphasis already laid on preventive health care. I accept that this is a wider issue involving education from an early age, but the Health Service spends millions, indeed billions, on helping people back to a full and healthy life where better preventive information and testing could have saved an individual from hospitalisation.

I give the example of coronary heart disease. This is the major cause of premature death for men in Britain and the second major cause for women. The British death rate from coronary heart disease is the worst in the world. The cost per year of treating this terrible disease in hospitals is enormous. Through a sustained campaign of education, through assessment of risk carried out at general practice level, and through a national awareness campaign, the cost to the Health Service of treating this disease can be reduced radically. How much could be done has been graphically demonstrated by the success of the AIDS campaign.

My opposition to the motion rests upon the premise that for far too long the Health Service has been regarded as a sacred institution where the only response to almost any question asked of it has been "We must have more money." As discoveries and new technological breakthroughs take place, the same cry inevitably goes up again. We cannot go on like that alone. The emphasis must be on securing more patient services and better health care by using new and creative means of making funds stretch further.

Above all, it is a question of planning. The Griffiths management system has made an excellent start. Those of us who believe in and support the National Health Service —even as I speak, my wife is about to give birth at UCH, one of our great inner-London hospitals—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"]—and who have benefited from it are not treacherous because we refuse to take the easy option of always demanding yet more funding from the Secretary of State. In pursuit of better patient care, there are these other ways as well of ensuring that universal health care can be strengthened and promoted.

9.20 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) on his welcome maiden speech. I hope that he will continue to make such contributions on this issue which is important to his constituents as well as to us.

It was astonishing that the Minister did not once mention the cuts in services that are the subject of the debate. It is astonishing, too, that against a background of growing complaints from all parts of the country the Government are still saying, "Cuts? What cuts?". It is clear from the speeches on both sides of the House that there are widespread cuts in hospital services throughout the country.

In Cornwall, for instance, in order to avoid a budget deficit, the district health authority has decided to close —temporarily it says—the maternity unit in Penzance. That could mean more than a hour's journey for a woman in labour, which, for some, will be too long and they will arrive too late. It also plans to close Falmouth casualty unit and a medical ward in the hospital in Redruth, and to scrap the hospital car services, which, in a sprawling rural area, would be disastrous.

Cornish Members complain in their constituencies about the cuts, but they have not taken part in the debate and no doubt they will not vote against the cuts that are so damaging to health services in their constituencies. If they are to be believed when they say that they care about their constituents and the Health Service, they must vote for the motion or lose their credibility with their constituents.

Similarly, the Bath health authority is looking to well-woman clinics to make savings to meet a £500,000 budget shortfall. If well-woman clinics are to go under the axe, so much for the prevention of ill health. Incidentally, where is the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) tonight?

East Anglia has also been hit. Clacton hospital's casualty unit is threatened and the children's unit was closed last month. I have a picture of Lady Ridsdale, the wife of the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), taking part in a protest march against the cuts in Clacton. It is a pity that her husband does not have the guts to vote against the cuts which are so hurting his constituents.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I hope that the hon. Lady listened to my speech. I am advocating value for money from the North-East Essex health authority before pressing the Government for more funds.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman's constituents in the protest march in which his wife took part were

complaining about the cuts in Clacton hospital's services, and the idea that the fault can be attributed to inefficiencies is nonsense.

Berkshire is also suffering tremendous health cuts. £1·3 million is being cut through the cancellation of operations on 3,500 patients, many of whom have already waited months for their operations. The hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) is quoted in a newspaper as saying:

"This is not on—we will not put up with these cuts".

I say to him: absolutely right. Now is the hon. Gentleman's chance to show that he means what he says. He must vote with us if he wants to show the Government that he means business, or it will be clear to those on frozen waiting lists in Berkshire that he is engaging in a cynical public relations exercise.

Recently, I was amazed to hear the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) roaring like a lion in a meeting with a couple of hundred people concerned about the closure of Southend's cancer unit. He roars like a lion when talking to his constituents, but he is like a mouse here—he will troop behind the Government into the lobby to vote for cuts that will finish off the cancer unit in Southend.

The Government's failure to fund Shropshire health authority adequately——

Mr. Newton: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but I notice that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) is not in the Chamber. I should make it clear that he and all the other hon. Members concerned with Southend had a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and made their points very forcefully. As I suspect the hon. Lady knows, the North-East Thames proposals for cancer services in Essex can in no sense be described as cuts. They entail additional expenditure.

Ms. Harman: When the right hon. Member for Castle Point was speaking to his constituents, he said that it was cuts because of underfunding.

In Shropshire the failure of the Government adequately to fund the health authority has led to plans to close Ellsmere cottage hospital, Market Drayton cottage hospital, Monkmore hospital, Much Wenlock cottage hospital, Newport cottage hospital, Oswestry and district hospital and the Wellington cottage hospital and to introduce further bed reductions at the Royal Shrewsbury hospital. I hope that hon. Members representing the people who will lose those local services in Shropshire will join the Opposition and say to the Government that Shropshire should get the new Telford hospital and be allowed to keep the much needed local services.

London has also been hard hit.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend says about Shropshire. I assure her that at least one Shropshire Member will be voting against the Government. I assure my hon. Friend and the House that before the last general election trade unions in the Health Service and the whole of the Labour party in Shropshire warned the public about the impending cuts and were accused by their political opponents of scaremongering. We now see who was right.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that London Health Emergency has just produced a report that has been published today in the *London Evening Standard*? It shows that mid-year budget cuts of £22 million are being made in London authorities. It says that 600 beds have been closed in London in the financial year since April, that every hospital in London is in some kind of crisis and that the London ambulance service is in permanent crisis.

The report says that there are only 30 controllers on at any one time and that at last week's King's Cross fire 85 ambulances should have been available but there were only 40. Should a major tragedy occur in London of much greater proportions than the King's Cross tragedy, the emergency services in the hospitals or the ambulance service will not be there to meet it. We do not need another decade of £100 million worth of cuts in London, but an urgent and immediate injection of cash into London.

Ms. Harman: My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is right about the pressure on services in London. It is a bitter irony that the doctors and nurses who are caring in University College hospital for the victims of the King's Cross fire are demoralised because there is not a proper burns unit. They fear that the application by the district health authority to the regional health authority for a proper burns unit will be turned down and that they will have to carry on in the temporary accommodation that they have been in for the last two years, and that they have to share with other surgeons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) spoke about the sad state of the health services in Birmingham and told us about an all-party deputation to the Minister to ask for more money. I hope that the five Conservative Members who went with him in that delegation to the Minister will also vote to back that pressure for more money in the region.

We have heard much hypocrisy from Conservative Members about cuts in the Health Service. They are prepared to defend it locally, but will do nothing nationally to improve its circumstances. The cuts that I have mentioned and those that have been listed by other hon. Members are inevitably bound to lead to longer waiting lists. The tragedy of the waiting list is not just the pain that people suffer while they are waiting. It also means that they are less likely to make a full recovery when they are finally treated, because their condition may have deteriorated.

The man who waits months for a hernia operation may find that he has lost his job by the time that he is treated and again fit for work. The elderly woman waiting for a hip replacement may find that she never makes a full recovery and gets back to leading a full life after her operation because months of isolation and immobility have made it impossible for her to get back to her normal life.

Long waiting lists are inefficient. The best way to treat people is when they need to be treated, not when they finally come to the end of a long queue.

I suspect that the Government are not unhappy about waiting lists. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), I believe that they are content to watch queues grow so that more people will become desperate and be driven into the commercial health care sector for treatment.

Cuts waste Health Service facilities. A recent National Audit Office report showed that only about half of available Health Service theatre time was being used; expensive operating theatres lie idle as waiting lists grow.

[Ms. Harman]

After the cuts that have been made—many more are in the pipeline—there will be even less use of valuable facilities.

It is clear that hospitals are short of money for three reasons. First, the Government have failed to give health authorities enough to cover medical inflation. Secondly, they have failed to give health authorities enough to cover pay awards; low pay is still endemic in the Health Service. Thirdly, they have failed to give health authorities enough money to meet the increasing demand for health care by a growing number of elderly people.

The Secretary of State and his Ministers have fallen into the habit of talking about "the insatiable, escalating demand of the Health Service." We are hearing that more and more, but one must bear in mind when one hears those words that our Health Service is a bargain.

Mr. Whitney *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I shall give way to the hon. Member in a minute.

We spend far less on health care than the United States because we have a better system. For the amount that we spend we receive a better service. Far from being insatiable, our Health Service is run on a shoestring. The increase in demand is not escalating, which could have been predicted, and it is growing no faster or slower than the service in any other comparable country.

The Government see medical advance as a problem, because it creates demand for extra resources. We do not see medical advances as a problem but as an enormous and marvellous opportunity to cure and heal people who could not have been cured in the past. The "insatiable escalating demand" myth is put about to soften everyone up for major changes in the way that our Health Service is funded, and that is what the Government are aiming for.

People such as the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) say that we cannot afford it out of taxes, so the Government will have to find other ways of funding the Health Service system. In that way he is a stalking horse for the Government's hidden agenda.

Mr. Whitney: Does the hon. Lady understand that there is a difference between the two propositions that she is trying to put to the House? First, she says that the NHS is run on a shoestring; I prefer to say that its administrative costs are low, as indeed they are. The second proposition, which she is trying to link with it, is that the only people who say that the Health Service costs are insatiable are Conservative Ministers. If she knew anything about history she would know that every Labour Minister of Health or Secretary of State for Social Services, from Aneurin Bevan to Lord Ennals, has said that demand is insatiable.

Ms. Harman: It is true that the Health Service needs extra money; it needs an extra £200 million, not the extra hundreds of billions that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. It is perfectly possible for Health Service needs to be met from a tax-based system. It would be disastrous if we were to move away from that.

We should be striving to improve the quality of care in the Health Service. The Government should be urging managers and administrators to find new ways to improve services. Instead the Government are urging managers and administrators to divert their attention to making more money. We want the Health Service to give priority to surgery, not supermarkets. We want it to be concerned about cancer, not caravan sites.

Let no one believe that there would be extra money for the Health Service. If any health authority managed to make money the Government would immediately say that it needed less from public funds. It is a tragedy, at a time when medical advance can do so much more, that the Health Service, which should be reaching out for new opportunities to treat illness, is being hobbled by spending restrictions. We should seize the opportunity dramatically to improve the chances of restoring to full recovery those who previously would have had no chance of getting well.

I shall mention some points relating to nurses. The matter has been highlighted by the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young), although he failed to get any response from the Minister. There has been enormous public concern, particularly focused on baby David Barber. Everyone must have been touched by the ordeal of parents who, to get their child the operation that he needed, had to resort to taking up their case with the media and, finally, taking it to court. Sadly, that is not an isolated case. Throughout the country, in all constituencies, beds and wards are being closed and operations are being postponed because of a shortage of nurses.

The Health Service is losing experienced nurses at the rate of 30,000 every year. Of course, the problem is particularly acute in London and Birmingham, but the shortage occurs in all parts of the country, as far apart as Norwich, Gwent, Cumbria and Oxfordshire. Patients suffer when there are not enough nurses. When patients finally go into hospital, nurses do not have enough time to nurse them in the way in which they want.

Obviously, it is important to do what we can to step up recruitment, but, of itself, recruitment is not enough to solve the problem. We cannot recruit fast enough, particularly for specialties such as theatre work, eye work, and orthopaedic nursing work. With recruitment, we are replacing experienced nurses with inexperienced nurses. Anyway, there is a growing problem with recruitment. Yesterday, the Norwich health authority told me that, two years ago, it had 3,000 applications for 200 places in its school of nursing. This year, it had barely 200 applicants. It cannot pick or choose. It has hardly enough applicants to fill the places. If the poll tax is imposed on student nurses, recruitment will no doubt be further choked off.

The Government have been blinking with disingenuous concern about the shortage of nurses. It has been exasperating to see Ministers appear on television and say, "Yes, we are so worried about the nursing shortage. Nothing to do with us; nothing to do with resources." But it has everything to do with the Government and everything to do with money.

I was astonished that the junior health Minister has tried to deny that nurses are low paid. Let me remind her of the facts. After three years' training, a nurse who has worked during her training gets no more than £7,300 a year. Take the case of Jackie Eliott, who has just set up the new AIDS ward in Middlesex hospital. As part of her job, she has twice had to appear on Terry Wogan's show, she has had to put together a new nursing team, and she has

the clinical challenge of dealing with a new area of medicine. What does she get paid for that? She gets less than £12,000 a year.

Nurses are leaving because of low pay, stress and overwork, and because the anti-social hours of their work do not fit well with the child care responsibilities that fall on women in this society. As the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth rightly said, if the Government actually wanted to solve the problem of the shortage of nurses, they would do three things. First, they would put up nurses' pay; secondly, they would make district health authorities arrange more flexible hours for nurses who have children, to encourage them back after maternity leave; and, thirdly, they would make child care provision for nurses' pre-school age children, again to provide a powerful incentive for married nurses with children to stay in the Health Service. But they do not do that, do they? The reason is that they are happy to see district health authorities underspend on their nursing budgets because, as far as the Government are concerned, that is a great way of saving money.

The nurse managers to whom I have spoken in the past few days say that they have already had to impose a recruitment freeze in their district health authorities to try to meet this year's deficit. Next year, they will have no option but to go for a recruitment freeze in respect of nurses, too. If the Government do not take steps to avoid that disaster, they will be held directly responsible for the dreadful effects that the growing shortage of nurses will cause.

Hon. Members have made it quite clear that, in every town, city and village, and in urban and rural regions in the north and south of the country, as a matter of their personal everyday experience, people feel that health services are being cut. The Government must act to protect and improve our Health Service, because it is one of the most valuable assets that the people of this country have.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): This has certainly been a lively debate. Sadly, it has not always been a good humoured one.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would, I am sure, wish me first to thank hon. Members for their good wishes for his speedy recovery. The House may also wish to join me in the hope that he has had a happy and restful 50th birthday.

I add my congratulations to those of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) to tonight's maiden speaker, the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes). I merely say to him that his concerns about the Morris engine factory are recognised, but that he may want to think how many of his hon. Friends are toddling around in foreign cars and whether they might give that company a little more support. *[Interruption.]* I drive a British car.

Some 20 hon. Members have spoken in the debate, and many have expressed concern about the allocation of money. There have been faults of fact, and faults of emphasis. However, let me make it clear that every one of the health authorities about which we have heard tonight has had more money under the present Government. Nearly all of them have had more direct care staff—in many cases considerably more—and they are all caring for far more patients than ever before. The debate has therefore been a little disappointing for many hon. Members who have not addressed themselves to the question other than in a very superficial way. At least the new hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) had the grace to say that he did not know the answers. For all his words about initial opposition to the Health Service when it was first established in 1948, it was most bitterly opposed by the consultants. One of the reasons was that they feared that their incomes would be cut, a fear that proved unfounded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) asked whether we could fund the Health Service through a new stamp. That, however, would merely be another form of taxation, and it would end up coming out of the same pocket as the present system.

Many hon. Members from the west midlands have spoken tonight. It is probably worth remembering that Birmingham is not the whole of the west midlands, and that currently under construction as part of the West Midlands regional health authority's capital allocation, which is the biggest in the country, are the £25 million district general hospital at Telford, the £21 million development at Stoke City general hospital and developments at Cheadle, Nuneaton, Warwick, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall—the latter being a £20 million development at the Manor hospital. We have not heard much from the hon. Members representing those areas, because they do not have much to whinge about.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): We have heard a good deal about what has happened to the West Midlands health authority. However, following the comments made earlier about the political aspects, may I ask why the West Midlands regional health authority was allowed to build up its budget in excess of £20 million in the pre-election period?

Why do we now have such a large overspend? The answer is that we have marginal seats throughout the west midlands, which the Government needed to win. Moreover, I now understand that, as a result of a meeting yesterday, the capital schemes to which the Minister referred will be cut back over the coming year and we shall lose those projects.

Mrs. Currie: I am afraid that I did not catch all of what the hon. Lady said. However, I know that there is a meeting on 9 December at which the regional health authority will sort out the capital programme. It is not true that the new children's hospital is being postponed indefinitely.

Another west midlands Member, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), complained bitterly about some of his constituents undergoing dialysis on the bus coming down here. The hon. Gentleman probably misunderstood their form of dialysis. They are undergoing CAPD, or continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis. They receive it all the time, and can move around while they receive it. In fact, they are receiving their dialysis whether on a bus or anywhere else. He should not complain about those people.

In his opening speech my hon. Friend the Minister for Health acknowledged that the Health Service has problems. I hope to argue that the sole solution of additional resources put forward by the Opposition in their motion is not the answer, or at least not the sole answer. We have been putting additional resources into

[Mrs. Currie]

the Health Service, and we will be putting more resources in. Funding is running at record levels and the largest amount of cash ever entrusted to the Health Service since its formation is now being spent. Hon. Members will say that that is not enough. I say that it never was enough and it never will be enough.

Mr. Lofthouse: It was better than this.

Mrs. Currie: Oh no, it was not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) was right in saying that the nature of the demand for health care is that it grows to outstrip all resources put into it. It always has and it always will. There will always be a gap between expectations, which rise without limit, and resources, which are finite, which are increased year by year to try to meet those expectations but never succeed. That is why part of the answer is to do as my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) said in his first-class speech. We should use what we have more efficiently, do all that we can to keep people fit in the first place and help them get better quicker when they are ill. These are not new problems. They are not new to this Government, and they are not new to Britain.

Mr. Robin Cook: If what we are experiencing is the same old story that has been going on for years, will the Minister comment on today's statement by Julia Cumberlege, the chairwoman of the National Association of Health Authorities, who observed:

"I cannot remember the service being as short of funds as it is at the moment."?

Mrs. Currie: Mrs. Cumberlege is a brainy lady. Part of the answer lies in a quotation from a paper written by another brainy lady, who said:

"demand will always outstrip our capacity to meet it."

That was said by Mrs. Barbara Castle when she was Secretary of State 10 years ago.

The Health Service, as has been said repeatedly, is partly a victim of its own success. In 1975, 11 babies in every 1,000 born alive died within the first month of birth. Now it is fewer than half that. Ten years ago — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is not interested in what happens to sick babies.

Ten years ago only 200 babies born weighing under 1,000 g survived. The figure is heading for 1,000 babies this year. A total of 3,000 babies are alive every year who could not have survived 10 years ago, and they include many of the babies about whom such concern has rightly been expressed this week.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr spoke about dialysis. We have heard about that from several hon. Members tonight. We have more patients in this country with a successful transplant — over 7,000 — than any other country in Europe. We do more transplants — 1,600 a year — than any other country. In 1980 only three out of five patients with a kidney transplant would have had that kidney functioning after a year. By 1985 the figure was 77 per cent. That is marvellous, but it puts——

Mr. Galbraith: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Currie: I have given way twice and that is enough. I wonder how many——

Mr. Galbraith *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister does not give way——

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order?

Mr. Cook: Yes, Sir. I must seek your guidance. I have never been in a debate where a Minister has intervened more than the Minister did tonight. The Minister has had many chances to intervene in other speeches, and Back Bench Members should have a chance to intervene in the Minister's speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The principle remains that if the Minister does not give way the hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Mrs. Currie: If Opposition Members are so keen on dialysis, they should encourage everyone to carry a kidney donor card, because that would help many patients.

Mr. Galbraith *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: No, I shall not give way.

Life expectancy in this country is rising fast, at the rate of two years every decade. A baby girl born today can reasonably expect to reach the year 2067, when she will be 80. By the end of this century, we expect to have 4·5 million people who are over the age of 75. We already have the largest proportion of retired people to population in the world, barring Sweden. Our life expectancy is much higher than in many other countries which spend far more on health, such as the United States.

Those are the successes of the Health Service, but they do not come cheap. A heart transplant costs about £10,000, bone marrow transplants about £15,000 and the daily cost of an in-patient is £84 today, compared with less than £40 in 1978. The cost in a London post-graduate hospital, such as the Brompton or the National Heart hospital, varies per patient between £1,600 and £1,900 per week. Costs are rising sharply, and not only for acute care. Anyone who reads *Hansard* carefully will have spotted a debate on Tuesday on the special hospitals at Rampton and Broadmoor. The cost of keeping one patient in such a hospital was about £14,000 per year in 1980, but was £32,000 last year.

We are faced with rapid escalations of medical possibilities and, as a result, rapid increases in demand. There are also pressures on intensive and specialist facilities. We recognise that and the pressure that that places on the skilled and scarce staff who are required. However, costs have a nasty tendency to spiral right out of control.

Hon. Members of all parties talk constantly as if there was a correct level of NHS funding, which was once achieved or which might be achieved. But that is not true, and it has never been true. If we go back to the heady days of 1946, so eloquently described by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) — we wonder whether he wrote his speech and understands what the Körner reforms really are — it was said then that it might prove a little costly to make a once-and-for-all improvement in the health of the population, but that all that would be required after thatwould be a modicum of expenditure to keep people well. How wrong they were. Nobody seemed to realise that there would be virtually unlimited demand for health care.

Mr. Frank Cook *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I understand that fact, and if the hon. Gentleman sits down I shall tell him.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that if the Minister does not give way he must not persist.

Mrs. Currie: I am so sorry if I have insulted the hon. Gentleman.

Health Ministers in Sweden, Italy, France and Australia all understand that there is virtually unlimited demand for health care. Even Health Ministers in the Soviet Union recognise that. I have a copy of an article that appeared in *The Health Service Journal* on 15 October 1987, headed:

"Soviet union may opt to boost private healthcare".

I understand that in mid-August the Soviet Council of Ministers issued an extensive policy on restructuring the health service, which included,

"reorganising hospitals on a cost-efficiency basis."

My hon. Friends and I know that there is virtually unlimited demand for health care and that it can never be satisfied and even the Soviet Union knows it. Why do Opposition Members not understand it? Every Minister who stands at the Dispatch Box knows it.

There is no correct level of funding at which all the problems would disappear; nor is there a correct level of pay at which we should suddenly be able to recruit all the staff that we need. We already employ more than 1·25 million people in the Health Service. We are the third largest employer in the world, after Indian railways and the Red Army.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that it is a point of order and not a point of argument.

Mr. Powell: I am begging your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you are here to protect the interests of all Members of the House, and in particular Back Benchers. I appeal to you to ask the Minister, when she names individual hon. Members, at least to have the courtesy to allow them to intervene in the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Every hon. Member and even every Minister must make his or her own speech—it is not a matter for the Chair—provided that it is in order.

Mr. Powell: The Minister has made nine speeches tonight.

Mrs. Currie: I wish to raise only two more points, as Opposition Members, with their spurious points of order, have pinched most of my time. First, what would happen if we took Labour's advice and let go with the finance? Secondly, what sort of NHS would we have again if the Labour party was in control? Suppose we were to say "OK, spend as much as you want." We are already spending £21 billion on the NHS.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Currie: How much money would be enough—£30 billion, or £40 billion? If we had increases——

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Currie: No. Sit down! — we would see an immediate and swingeing increase in tax. We would see rapid rises in inflation and we would see a reversal of recent improvements—*[Interruption.]*—in the economy.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are four minutes to go and I appeal to the House to hear the Minister.

Mrs. Currie: We would see an increase in unemployment instead of a fall.

Ten years ago a British Chancellor, who had cheerfully let rip with pay rises and spending increases, was hauled off a plane at Heathrow and forced to go to the IMF, not as one of the wealthy lender nations, which we are now, but cap-in-hand like some poverty-striken Third world country to beg for help to pay his debts *[Interruption.]* We were bankrupt. Then what happened to the NHS? That year the nurses had a 5 per cent. pay rise—that does not compare with this year's 9·5 per cent. pay award—and inflation was 15 per cent. As my hon. Friends have said, nurses had a 10 per cent. cut in pay that year, the following year and the year after that. By the time the Labour party lost power the real income of nurses had declined by more than 20 per cent. and it took a long time to catch up.

The Labour party closed beds and hospitals. Indeed, under the previous Labour Government more than 270 hospitals were closed—far more than we are ever likely to close. We could increase spending, but if we did what the Opposition wanted—*[Interruption.]*—They do not like it do they?—we could increase spending but once. The following year the bills would come in and they would have to be paid. It is far better to have steady real growth of 1 or 2 per cent. a year, because we could then have a strong economy, the envy of the world and a strong Health Service, with the firm knowledge of more to come for years to come.

What sort of Health Service would we have if the Labour party was in charge? It would abolish charges, and as a result the Labour party would lose the NHS £500 million without any improvement in the services to patients. It would lose the NHS £300 million by the stopping of competitive tendering and the sale of property. It would do all in its power to stop income generation, which we believe will bring us £70 million. It would abolish pay beds, with all the money that they bring in. The Labour party would squeeze the drug companies so that many would stop undertaking research. And then the Labour party would nationalise them. That is the kind of Health Service that the Labour party would run.

Worst of all, the Opposition would run the Health Service, not for the benefit of the patient, but for the benefit of the unions, their paymasters — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—who wrote their speeches for them tonight. That is how they did it last time, and that is how they will do it again. The results of the Opposition running the Health Service were record waiting lists of three quarters of a million people.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes, 205, Noes, 326.

Division No. 84] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger

Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the increased number of people being treated in the hospital and community health services, and recognises and applauds the work of all groups of staff that have made this possible; congratulates the Government on again maintaining the National Health Service programme of hospital building and providing a high level of investment in the service next year; reaffirms its intention to continue the promotion of a comprehensive health service; and recognises the Government's achievement in establishing the sound economy necessary to support the continued development of the health service.

Financial Assistance to Opposition Parties

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Leader of the House, I must tell the House that I have not been able to select the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and his hon. Friends.

10.14 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the Resolution of the House of 20th March 1975 shall have effect with the omission of the proviso to paragraph (2) of that Resolution.

The motion will not, I hope, detain the House for long. *[Interruption.]* It seeks to make only——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members who are not staying for the debate please leave quietly?

Mr. Wakeham: It seeks to make only one limited change to the resolution that has been the basis of the arrangements for providing financial assistance to Opposition parties since those arrangements began in 1975. It comes before the House as an interim measure, against the background of an overall review of the scheme, and for that reason I hope that the wider questions associated with the subject can be left to a later occasion.

The prospect of an overall review was raised in March this year by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He said that he expected a review of the financial assistance arrangements to take place either later this year or next. That has now begun, and it would be premature to make significant changes to the scheme before the House has had an opportunity to consider the proposals that the review produces. I realise that there are important issues to be looked at in any reappraisal of the arrangements —questions about the basis of the formula; the amounts for which it provides; the uprating of these figures; and the relationship between this scheme and other benefits available to the Opposition. All those issues may be discussed when the House returns to the subject.

In considering the motion, the House may find it helpful to be reminded briefly of the background to it. Arrangements to give financial assistance to Opposition parties were introduced by Lord Glenamara when, as Mr. Edward Short, he was Leader of the House, hence the term "Short money" by which the scheme is sometimes known. The assistance is related solely to the work of the Opposition parties at Westminster, and the amounts available are set by a formula. This provided for a certain amount for each seat won at the preceding general election, and a much smaller amount for every 200 votes cast for that party.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend help those of us who were not here in 1975 by telling us whether there is any assessment in the formula for the quality of work done by the Opposition? He has said so far that it is simply an arithmetical formula. Is he prepared to accept that some of us will be looking for quality in the Opposition's contribution and input in assessing whether they should get any of the money at all?

Mr. Wakeham: If my hon. Friend has views on that —I suspect that he has—I shall be perfectly prepared to discuss the matter with him, but I suggest that that would probably be better done at the review rather than today when we are dealing with an interim arrangement while the existing arrangement is the subject of the present review. I should be happy to receive the views of my hon. Friend, who may wish to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, during the debate.

The present levels of £1,500 for each seat and £3 for every 200 votes were approved by the House with effect from 1 January 1985. In addition, a figure was set for the maximum which could be claimed annually by any one Opposition party. That is currently £450,000.

The motion would remove that maximum figure. On the basis of the formula agreed in 1985, the official Opposition would be able to claim annually an additional £50,000 or so, following the relatively modest improved result they obtained in this year's general election. That increase would take the amount they could claim annually to about £490,000—substantially above the maximum for which the resolution provides.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We do not intend to oppose the motion, but I should be interested to learn why a maximum was set in the first place if it is being removed on the first occasion that it comes into operation.

Mr. Wakeham: That shows that it is sometimes a mistake to give way. The point made by the hon. Gentleman is exactly what I am coming to. There is one point of substance on which I should perhaps comment, in case any of my hon. Friends feel that we are proposing to be more generous to the Opposition than Lord Glenamara thought would be appropriate when he set up the arrangements. His view was that there should be a maximum figure as well as a formula, because the responsibilities of a principal Opposition party were not necessarily greater because it had, say, 250 rather than 200 Members.

I have no doubt that the House will wish to address that proposition in the wake of the review and I would not wish to pre-empt that now. My reason for bringing forward the motion is to seek to maintain the position of the Opposition parties under the arrangements as last approved by the House. When the House approved the present figures for the formula and for the maximum figure, it set the maximum figure at just above the total amount to which the formula would then entitle the main Opposition party. That enabled all the Opposition parties to claim the full amount available to them under the formula. Today's motion would maintain that position. I believe that that approach must be the right one, pending completion of the review.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I understand the mathematics in relation to the main Opposition party and I understand the dilemma of the Leader of the House in respect of the overall review when it comes to the minority parties, particularly the SDP, which now has two separate mutations. To whom will the money for the SDP be allocated? Will it go to the former leader or to the current leader? Will it go to the provisionals or to the officials?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman establishes me in confirming that my view is right that we should consider these matters after the review and not tonight when we are dealing with the interim measure to continue the existing arrangements.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend may be coming to the point; he might already

have made the point, but there has been some hubbub and it has not been possible to hear everything that he has said. Can my right hon. Friend answer one question clearly? If we vote for the motion, will the Opposition get more money than if we vote against it? If we vote against it, do they get more money than if we vote for it? Which way should we vote if we want the Opposition to get less money?

Mr. Wakeham: If my hon. Friend will promise to listen carefully to what I have to say and will seek to remember what I have said until the Division, so that there is no mistake afterwards, I have to tell him that if he votes for the motion the Opposition will get more money; if he votes against the motion the Opposition will get less money. I recommend to my hon. Friend that he votes for the motion. I think that I have said enough to explain to the House the nature of the motion and the reasons why we should not go beyond that today.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am pleased that the right hon. Gentleman has cleared the air for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). Will the right hon. Gentleman please tell him that one day the Conservative party will be the Opposition?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that I was going to have to explain it all over again to the hon. Gentleman. I think that he and I will both be fully retired before that day arises.

As I have said, the House will have an opportunity to consider the more general issues which arise from the review of the Short money arrangements but in the meantime I commend the motion to the House.

10.23 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The Leader of the House has described this as a modest proposal in advance of a thorough review of financial assistance to Opposition parties. That is precisely what it is — a very small amendment to an existing resolution of the House. It follows the pattern of the first resolution on the subject on 20 May 1975. It was affirmed in a number of subsequent resolutions in 1978, 1980, 1983 and 1985, and, for those in any doubt, the first proposal came from a Labour Government, when the principal beneficiary of the money proposed for the use of Opposition parties was the Conservative party.

The House is being asked to do something simple and straightforward — to agree that the agreed formula for financial assistance to Opposition parties, which is based on seats and votes, should be adhered to in the light of the result of this year's general election. I need hardly remind the House that that election adjusted the seats and votes of all parties in the House, especially those of the Labour party. The Labour vote went up from 8,457,000 to 10,000,000 at the general election, and its number of seats rose from 209 to 229. The application of the formula would bring the amount of money to which we are entitled considerably above the limit established in the original resolution. I remind the House of the considerable contribution made to the figures by the electorate in The Wrekin, which returned a Labour Member of Parliament and in which the Labour vote rose by about 5,000. That is one of the reasons why we think it right that the House should support the motion.

When the original motion was proposed, there was quite rightly, a debate on the principle of whether there should be financial assistance for political parties. It was a genuine debate about an issue over which there are deep divisions. Having made the decision that there should be support for Opposition parties in Parliament, it would be quite wrong not to pass the resolution this evening—it merely means that the formula can be applied. The debate on the principles has already taken place, and if we do not remove the ceiling tonight the formula that was previously agreed cannot be applied.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): The hon. Gentleman said that Labour party membership had risen in this Parliament. However, he has not said what the average electorate in each constituency represented by a Labour Member numbers. Most of the increases that he is talking about took place in Scotland, where the constituencies are minuscule. The hon. Gentleman will find that the average size of a constituency held by a Labour Member before the last election was larger than it is now, so why should the Opposition be entitled to any more money?

Mr. Grocott: One of the gains with which I am familiar took place in the 15th largest constituency of the 656 constituencies in the United Kingdom — that of The Wrekin, which has an electorate of 83,000 and is a Labour-held seat. It is common sense that the formula should be based on seats and votes. That acknowledges the greatly increased work and effort required of an Opposition party in a modern Parliament. Perhaps the best statement of that, made with characteristic frankness, came from Jim Prior in a debate in July, 1974—the Conservative party was then in opposition—when he said of the Opposition parties:

> "Concerning additional cash for Opposition parties, I suppose that one of the benefits of the change in Government in recent years is that it has brought to the notice of Governments the very great difficulties from which Oppositions suffer, particularly Shadow Ministers . . .
>
> But certainly, as far as this proposal goes, I believe that Front Bench spokesmen, with the additional correspondence and additional research work that is now required of them—which is far greater than it was even a few years ago—do need the sort of assistance that the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned."—[*Official Report*, 29 July 1974; Vol. 878, c. 33-4.]

There is no doubt, and it is accepted in the increased allowances to individual Members in recent years, that the pressures and demands on Members on the official Opposition and other opposition parties has greatly increased over the years. The motion is entirely in line with previous motions applying an agreed formula based on seats and votes to opposition parties. I commend the motion to the House.

10.31 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I cannot support this motion, because it is fundamentally and inherently wrong to force the taxpayer to contribute to the funds of any political party in Britain. Political parties should raise their own funds by their own means by appealing to their supporters. That is the principle to which the Conservative party has adhered for many years. It certainly did not support the introduction of this provision in 1975 and many hon. Members myself included, voted against it at that time.

It must be inherently wrong that in this healthy democracy of ours it is necessary in a blind sort of way, according to the number of votes recorded and hon.

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

Members elected to the House, to call upon taxpayers to contribute to the funds of voluntary organisations serving political ends whether or not the taxpayers support those political ends.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does not the hon. Gentleman think that the letter sent by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) to shareholders in newly privatised public assets was in a sense doing exactly that by trying to make money for a political party from public assets? Indirectly, that money was from taxes paid.

Mr. Stanbrook: What the hon. Member says betrays his ignorance of the democratic process. The motion proposes that whether he likes it or not the taxpayer will have to subsidise political parties. That is a far cry from asking people for financial support. I am in favour of people contributing voluntarily. The system that presently applies to the Conservative party should be encouraged and not discouraged by motions such as this.

In an earlier incarnation I was an officer of the Government of Nigeria. In those days, about 30 years ago, one political party required all its candidates to sign two letters, both of which were undated. One of the letters was addressed to the Speaker of the House and offered the resignation of the Member concerned. The other was addressed to the equivalent of our Fees Office and said that, from the date of election, 10 per cent. of the salary of the Member concerned should be paid to the political party.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Just like the Labour party.

Mr. Stanbrook: As my hon. Friend correctly says, just like the Labour party. Any member of that Nigerian party who strayed out of line simply had the date inserted on the letter and it became a resignation letter. All of the members of the party paid 10 per cent. and that was automatically deducted from their salaries in order to maintain their own party because they did not have the ability, strength, knowledge or support in the country to justify raising money by appealing to their supporters. That system applied in a relatively unsophisticated country where the people had nothing like our political experience of operating a democracy.

Therefore, it is quite wrong for the Labour party, which introduced this provision, and for all those parties that would benefit from it to say that they cannot raise money and appeal to the taxpayer to give them money whether he likes it or not to keep their essential services going.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I appreciate the stance of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), although I disagree with it. Having voted against this in 1975, did the Conservative party in the period during which it was in opposition take the money that was payable to the Opposition? Would the Conservatives take it if they were again in opposition in future?

Mr. Stanbrook: My understanding is that they did not take it, so they were true to their word. In any event, I have voted against resolutions on every occasion, so I can speak with a clear conscience. It is not right or good for our democracy that political parties should depend in any way upon public revenue for support.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been looking at the Division lists and I can say to my hon. Friend that he voted against the resolution in 1975, as indeed did a number of surprising hon. Members on both sides of the House. I ought to say that the Conservative Opposition took the money then.

Mr. Stanbrook: I can only depore that fact; it is wrong in principle. If protests are not raised about the practice in the House every time that the matter is raised, taxpayers will be required gradually to pay more of the central research and headquarters costs of the parties. We do not know even now how the money is spent.

There is no control on this money whatsoever. Does the Public Accounts Committee know about it? It has never been investigated. So far as we know, the money goes to the Labour party, not to the Leader of the Opposition. It is not necessarily applied for the stated purposes.

Mr. Grocott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: I shall be glad to give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will assure me that none of the money goes to the Labour party.

Mr. Grocott: The hon. Gentleman can be absolutely assured about that. It has been stated on many occasions that the money is used for parliamentary opposition within the House.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am very glad to hear that, but one reason why we have kept the funding within bounds is the ritual protests by hon. Members like myself against the principle. If the Labour party has the support in this country to justify a national political party, surely it can raise the money necessary for the operation of the office of the Leader of the Opposition in the House, because it is a small proportion of the money that is required to carry on a national political party.

In the Conservative party we constantly get complaints about the extent of donations, but almost every constituency association is self-supporting and raises its money from numerous small functions and individual subscriptions; from profits derived from jumble sales, coffee mornings and cheese and wine parties. Those activities are doubly beneficial because, while they provide for the activities of the party within the constituencies, they enable democracy to work better and the party is more responsive to those who vote for it and who pay something for it at the same time. The Labour party knows nothing about that because it is so dependent on funds coming from trade unions.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): What I do not quite understand from the hon. Gentleman's contribution is this: if the Conservative party is in a healthy financial position, and certainly we know that substantial sums of money are received from industry, why did Tory Members vote for the measure in 1975 and were only too willing to receive the money when they were in opposition? Although I know that the hon. Gentleman voted against the motion with some of his hon. Friends, the majority of his hon. Friends did otherwise and they received the money in opposition. Why did he not persuade his own party that it was wrong to take that money in order to run an effective opposition?

Mr. Stanbrook: The hon. Gentleman has not been listening to what I have been saying, and he is quite wrong. The Conservative party did not vote for the provision in 1975. My right hon. Friend has said that it may have

accepted money subsequently. That is as may be, but in principle it was regarded as wrong by many members of the Conservative party.

So far as donations from companies are concerned, money should be raised from as broad a base as possible. That means individual subscriptions, small amounts, being collected within constituencies, and that for the most part is what the Conservative party does.

I could not have supported the amendment standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and others, most of whom entered Parliament at the last election. They have not had the salutary experience that some of us have had of being in opposition. I remind them that discipline here is a matter for Mr. Speaker. It is not for hon. Members to impose it in relation to payments made to individual parties.

10.41 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I, too, regret that the amendment standing in the names of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and some of his hon. Friends has not been selected, because, though feeble, at least it was a positive attempt to measure attendance, record and effort against the remuneration of Members. It is not a bad idea to pay by results.

With that in mind, I have been looking up the extramural activities of the Conservative Members who put their names to that amendment. What do they do outside the House, these part-time MPs?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want to interrupt the hon. Member, but I remind him that this matter concerns assistance to Opposition parties. It does not go wider than that.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I believe that Opposition parties should be rewarded by results, and to illustrate my case I am referring to Conservative Members who are managing directors, consultants, bankers, insurance agents—some of them not so good at that, either—a crematorium director, a professional footballer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate the hon. Member's remarks to the subject of assistance to Opposition parties. He is miles wide of that. He must stick to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that you will be generous enough to allow me to illustrate my argument in this way, Mr. Speaker. We have a pro-footballer and cricketer — although there are doubts about whether he was either of those—and one does not know what else he may have been. I need not give more illustrations. It is clear that Conservative Members are simply indulging in hypocrisy.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) said that money should not be given to political parties. He takes that view because, like so many of his class and background, he believes that power, like privilege, can be bought: that if one's cheque book is strong enough one can buy power, privilege, health care and one's way into parts of society that only money enables one to enter. That is at the root of what the Tory party is all about. The Tory party is the party of choice and the party of freedom, but the choice and the freedom are available only for those who can afford to pay for them. That is the Tory party, and it is coming out tonight.

The hon. Member for Orpington talked about the party raising its money with jumble sales and sewing circles. What a load of codswallop. Everyone knows where the Tory party gets its millions. The information is published every year, and it is easy enough to get hold of it. The hon. Gentleman's party managers are so proud of where they get their money from that they publish their list themselves. Fine. At least they are not hypocritical, as so much of the argument from the Conservative Benches has been tonight.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I ask the hon. Gentleman to direct his mind to the point that has attracted so much interest on this side of the House? There is a strong feeling among Conservative Members that there is an implied condition that Opposition Members who receive money from the House for the furtherance of their duties should uphold the traditions of Parliament. The money is provided for the better operation of Parliament, and good behaviour and obedience to convention are essential for that better operation.

Recently, along with many other new Members, I was present in the House when you, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately found it necessary to name a Member. In the Division that followed, we saw a number of Opposition Members—including Whips—vote against you. I was also present when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is going to develop his theme in a speech, which would be out of order. This is not an intervention.

I direct the House to the motion on the Order Paper. I must ask the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who has the Floor, to direct his speech to the motion. The motion concerns the provision of resources to Opposition parties. It is not about the interests of Conservative Members.

Mr. Rogers: I had left that a long time ago, Mr. Speaker. I was simply commenting on the speech of the hon. Member for Orpington, which was perfectly in order. If he was in order, I strongly suggest that I am in order. I then gave way to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who is a barrister and comes in here occasionally, to allow him to get the flavour of the debate. However, he wanted to make a speech, but you rightly brought that to an end.

Parties need money to operate. The important issue is where that money comes from. There are strong arguments for state funding of parties. That would mean, for instance, that the Conservative party could break away from the shackles of big business and the City and start to operate as an enlightened, intelligent and democratic party. Instead, it will continually be in hock to the people who finance it.

It is becoming progressively more expensive to run political business.

Let me give a simple illustration. In 1979 the Prime Minister's office cost £1,400,000 to run. In 1986 it cost £5 million. No one is saying that it is not cheap at the price; no one is saying that we are, or are not, getting value for money. That is not my argument. My argument is that a political operation is expensive, and if it is expensive for the Prime Minister and for the Conservative party in Government, it is expensive for the Opposition. I should have thought that, instead of burking, Conservative Members would have supported the Government, who are

[Mr. Rogers]

sufficiently enlightened to realise the grave implications of adopting the attitudes of the secondhand car salesmen on the Conservative Back Benches.

10.49 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I support the motion and the review that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House announced. The motion relates to democracy. I respect the views of the few hon. Members, on both sides of the House, including my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who have consistently opposed the payment of such moneys, but on balance it is entirely right that the money should be paid. In the late 1970s, the Conservative party in opposition accepted the money, and we should pay it to the present Opposition, but when reviewing the matter I hope that my right hon. Friend will take into account some of the events of the past few weeks.

May I allude to an incident two days ago, when one of your Deputies was in the Chair, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) was opening her first Adjournment debate—a debate on mental health, which hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree is extremely important—when the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) chose to stage his little protest and attack the Chair, although not physically this time. He not only lost five minutes of the debate, but he forced my hon. Friend to start her speech four times. I do not believe that he did it on purpose, but that is what happens if hon. Members regard breaches of discipline in the House as a means of gaining publicity.

May I also mention the incident involving the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). People will appreciate how strongly some Conservative Members felt about the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the Prime Minister.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman is talking about conduct that does not meet with his approval, although I should have thought that conduct was a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. Is he aware that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who was Secretary of State for Defence before he walked out of a Cabinet meeting, went up to the Mace, put it above his head and demonstrated? What does the hon. Gentleman think about that behaviour?

Mr. Brazier: I shall deal with that point later.

In the incident in which the hon. Member for Linlithgow was involved, the important point is not that the Prime Minister was involved; nor is it important that a new Member was involved in the other incident that I mentioned, although that is why 31 new Members signed the amendment to the motion. What matters—it should not be for new Members to have to say this—is that every Member represents 60,000 or 70,000 constituents and should be given a fair chance to make his or her point heard within the rules of the House. An attack on the rules of the House, whether it comes from one party or the other, is an attack on democracy.

For nearly six months I have managed to avoid mentioning my political idol, Sir Thomas More. When he occupied the seat in which you sit now, Mr. Speaker, he risked his life several times to uphold the rules of the House. Subsequently, as Lord Chancellor, he said something that we should all remember: that if the devil himself came forward he would not try to prosecute him unless he could do so within the laws of the country.

When my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House reviews the sums paid to Opposition parties, he should consider deducting a nominal amount of £1,500 that is the capitation allowance, for each Opposition Member who chooses, from this moment on, to break the rules of the House to the extent that you, Mr. Speaker, must suspend him.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Is my hon. Friend saying that the money given to the Social Democratic party should be regarded as a marriage licence, or a death grant?

Mr. Brazier: I do not know whether it would be in order for me to tell the House a story, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may tell a story if it is relevant to the motion on the Order Paper. I have taken his remarks so far as being a background to what he is intent on saying, but his remarks must be related to the motion.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Can my hon. Friend shed any light on the presence or otherwise of the Social Democratic party? Is it too moribund to attend to decide whether it will marry or continue with the last rites?

Mr. Brazier: I do not think that I can comment on my hon. Friend's intervention.

I have some final comments to make to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. First, this is a matter that concerns primarily Opposition parties, because there is no public handout of the same sort for the party that is in government. It would seem, however, that Opposition Members have nothing to fear. Presumably they believe that at some time in the next century the Conservative party will find itself in opposition. To that extent, the motion applies to all parties.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the Conservative party in Scotland is in opposition, it having only 10 Members in Scotland?

Mr. Brazier: We are not trying to claim the money, whatever the hon. Lady's views on that subject may be.

I am not being vindictive. I am not suggesting that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House should consider deducting money on the basis of past offences. I merely suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it would increase your authority were such a deduction to be made for future offences. All those on both sides of the House who believe in democracy should welcome the nominal change to our arrangments that I propose as a step to upholding the rules of the House.

10.58 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) referred to an amendment that you did not select, Mr. Speaker. As he was not a Member of this place at the time, I shall tell him that there was a debate on what should happen to Members who were suspended or named.

During that debate we heard those who suggested, in the form of an amendment, that it would not be a bad idea

if Members who were suspended forfeited their pay. The hon. Member for Canterbury will be interested to know that I voted for forfeiture of pay. I am sure that he will be interested to know also that the majority of Tory Members voted that Members who were suspended should retain their money. The hon. Gentleman should have a word with some of his hon. Friends, but not, perhaps, with the Leader of the House, who was not in his present position at that time. I see no real hardship in having to forfeit a few bob in the course of what is a well-paid occupation.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) voted in principle in 1975 against the Short money. He has reaffirmed that decision this evening. I believe that the hon. Member should remember that the Tory party took the money and, more than that, it took his money as well. It took the equivalent of the money of the hon. Member for Orpington. It took the number of votes that were cast for that hon. Member as well.

I think that it would be a fair bet—I am prepared to have this checked out—that every member of the Tory party who qualified under the rules in 1975 contributed towards that total of Opposition money that they kept until 1979. *[Interruption.]* Someone says that there was no alternative. I venture to suggest that if the principle was so strong it would not have taken a great deal of ingenuity for someone to say, "Well, my principles are so strong that I believe that the money should not be handed over in my name." In fact that person could have gone further and said, "I will contribute the money instead." They could have moved a resolution—they could have done lots of things. Although the hon. Member for Orpington made a strong point, the fact is that for four glorious years the Tory party took the money in the name——

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is saying that that was wrong. Therefore it is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to take the money.

Mr. Skinner: What I am saying is that to get the money every single Member contributed towards it.

The Government also use a lot of money and it is worth noting that, during the past few years a check on the amount of money that is spent by the Prime Minister in carrying out her functions in Downing street and Chequers, shows that when the last Labour Prime Minister left the amount of money that was expended——

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman has changed his mind.

Mr. Skinner: No, I have not. When the last Labour Prime Minister left office the amount of money that was expended in 10 Downing street and Chequers was £1·25 million per annum. In eight years that figure has increased to £4·9 million per annum.

If there are to be penalties we should start with one today. It is simple. The Secretary of State for the Environment has cost the taxpayer another £50,000 because he printed a Bill the wrong way round. No surcharge for him. There is no one crying on the Tory Benches about that expenditure of Government money coming straight out of the taxpayers' pockets. That money has come, as the Prime Minister would say, from, "Your next door neighbour's pocket."

This is an interim measure.

Mr. Marlow: Is the hon. Gentleman going to take the money?

Mr. Skinner: I never took any.

This measure does not deal with the problem faced by the Leader of the House. I believe that there will have to be some hard thinking done to sort out the mess on the Benches beside and behind me—*[Interruption.]*—I refer, of course, to the SDP and the Liberals.

The votes that were cast in June 1987 were cast for people standing for either the Liberal party or the SDP—the alliance. An easy calculation was made. One way was to calculate the money on the basis of the number of the Members who were returned for the alliance. The other was to calculate the amount of money on the votes for each of those candidates—a fairly simple matter. It always has been simple. Now there is the possibility of several different mutations. Possibly there will be a merged party with a new name, it may be the Democrats or it may be a much longer title. There could well be another smaller party—the Council of Social Democracy. Not one voter cast a vote for the Council of Social Democracy at the last election. Not one voter cast a vote for a merged party. Someone has to calculate how the money is to be split up.

It has crossed my mind that one of the reasons why the ex-leader of the Social Democratic party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) wants to retain the party's name has more to do with putting his hand into the taxpayers' pocket than it has to do with some matter of principle.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): For once I agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He has put his finger on a most important point. Does he agree that many of the votes cast for those two parties that masqueraded as one were bogus, that they would not be cast in current circumstances and that it is, therefore, quite improper to award money on the basis of their bogus prospectus that won false seats and false votes?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman might be interested in a letter that I sent to the Leader of the House on 25 August, before the merger was discussed, in which I said:

"Dear John Wakeham,

As you know, the result of the ballot on the SDP was in favour of a merger, yet discussions are continuing as to whether a separate SDP will be formed.

All this presents you and the Commons with the problem of allocating the so-called 'Short money' for the next few years. For instance, if another leader is elected by the SDP MPs, will that leader receive the allocation which I believe currently stands at £62,562, or will it remain with the leader at the time of the election, David Owen, MP?

Further, what will happen if a merger takes place and a rump of SDP supporters form another 'mutation'; will that new party receive money even though it did not fight the general election of 1987 in that precise form? In view of the fact that this is taxpayers' money I believe the public have the right to know."

The Leader of the House replied by saying that the matter was under review. When I receive letters like that, I know that there is a problem. I received another letter this week in answer to another problem in which it was said that I would be answered shortly. *[Interruption.]* It is not a laughing matter. I must say, however, that in some of my wilder moments I have enjoyed the dilemma that is facing the Leader of the House and hon. Members on the SDP and Liberal Benches.

I am looking forward not so much to the end of the debate as to the review. I want to hear how Solomon divides the money. It will need a Solomon to do that

[Mr. Skinner]

because the taxpayers are keen to know what will happen to that cash. As we have to wait for that review, I shall reserve my judgment.

11.4 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): There are a number of problems with the proposition before us, not the least of which is that, in the time honoured constitutional sense, one Parliament cannot bind another. The view that the House took of the matter in 1975 need not inhibit or bind the House or the Parliament in 1987.

I, and many of my hon. Friends who signed the excellent amendment that has not been selected, were not here in 1975. We have a different view of the House, the way in which it works and of the Opposition. Our respect for the Opposition is perhaps not that which our gentlemanly predecessors took in 1975. There are a number of reasons, but I will recount just two or three as that should suffice. The first reason has been alluded to by my hon. Friends. In judging the performance and quality of the Opposition and their contribution to the House, in the constitutional arrangement, and in deciding whether taxpayers money should be given in an even handed way to the Opposition, we look to their attitude to you, Mr. Speaker. It has already been suggested that many Opposition Members, including Opposition Front Bench spokesmen and Opposition Whips sought not to support you, Mr. Speaker over a vital matter of the convention and conduct of this House. The House is entitled to take a view of that matter. We should judge whether we should fund the Opposition in view of their conduct towards you, Mr. Speaker, and how they support you. They are sadly and totally lacking in that support.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you please guide the House? On the occasion to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, was not the motion moved by the Leader of the House at the Dispatch Box? Anyone voting either way on that motion was voting in support of the Leader of the House or against him.

Mr. Speaker: I should be very grateful if the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) would keep me out of these matters.

Mr. Forth: Indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Another matter that we might consider is the attendance of Opposition Members in the House. We need look no further than last Friday when there was a very important debate to which the Opposition were supposed to attach a great deal of importance.

The Opposition, whom we are being asked to fund, were nowhere to be seen in the Division Lobbies on Friday. The debate was about a vital matter to do with the coal mining industry and we are told repeatedly that Opposition Members are very concerned about the industry. We looked in vain for them in the Lobbies; they were not doing their jobs. They were not opposing and they were not representing their constituents.

I believe that we are entitled to make our judgment on the conduct of Opposition Members their contribution to the House and the seriousness with which they treat the House.

Mr. Rogers: I support the hon. Gentleman's contention although I disagree with his illustration of last Friday. All of us were here, but we decided not to vote. We were here and that is the end of it. Having said that I support the hon. Gentleman's contention, but not his illustration, will he now table a motion that I will sign for clocking on and clocking off at every entrance to the Palace of Westminster and so turn this into a proper job? If the hon. Gentleman has the guts to table such a motion tomorrow I will support it and I am sure that most of my hon. Friends will do the same. If that is what the hon. Gentleman is saying, he should have the guts to do it.

Mr. Forth: I am tempted by the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. In invite the hon. Gentleman to examine my voting record in the House, because I believe that it bears any examination.

That is not the point. The motion invites us to vote money for the Opposition. It does not invite us to do anything else. We are entitled to judge the Opposition in terms of their conduct in the House, their attendance in the House and the extent to which they pay this House respect by attending and voting in the Division Lobbies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why Opposition Members may be so concerned to get this money is that they are worried that the sponsorship from the National Union of Mineworkers might be withdrawn after last Friday?

Mr. Forth: Tempted though I am by my hon. Friend's comments, I will resist temptation and say merely that Opposition Members will have to make their own peace with their paymasters.

I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider my final point. I am prepared for the House to make its judgment in this and for the Opposition to carry the main burden of voting on the motion. I hope to have the opportunity to vote against the motion and I hope that my hon. Friends will bear in mind that the value of the resolution can be judged no more clearly than by the number of Opposition Members who appear tonight to vote for the motion. I hope that my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends will be prepared to accept that, if they cannot join me in voting against it, the best thing that they can do is to abstain so that we may judge how many Opposition Members have taken the trouble to be here to carry the motion.

11.10 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has taken us along some false lines. Last Friday's debate, at which I was present, was on a private Member's motion and is not relevant to this debate. A number of my hon. Friends and I were in the House. However, the debate was on the coal mining communities and, having looked into the Chamber on several occasions, I chose to leave it to those hon. Members with a direct involvement in the constituencies affected.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): When the hon. Gentleman had the chance to support private enterprise in opening a coal mine in Burnley, he chose to withdraw his support from the local council, of which he was the leader at the time. Perhaps he might give us his reasons for doing that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If he were to do so, it would be very wide of the debate.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman's accusation is totally wrong anyway, but you have indicated, Mr. Speaker, that you do not wish me to take up the point, and I shall accept your ruling.

The business of last Friday is not relevant to the motion, which relates to the money to be paid to the Opposition parties.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): The hon. Gentleman says that the events of last Friday are not relevant to the debate. Will he cast his mind back to the events of nine days before that, when we debated the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill? At 5.20 am, only 32 Opposition Members were present. Does that reflect their interest in the dock labour scheme?

Mr. Pike: Again, that business was supposed to be private business, although the Government whipped Conservative Members to support the Bill.

Mr. Frank Cook: My hon. Friend may find it helpful to recall the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. If he examined the *Official Report*, he would find that about 99·8 per cent. of the contributions to the all-night sitting were made by Opposition Members. From the Conservative Benches we heard only the snores of those hon. Members who were sleeping in a drunken stupor.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the use of the phrase "drunken stupor" is not permitted in the Chamber.

Mr. Cook: On the advice of my hon. Friends, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the word "drunken" and substitute "half sober".

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw his remarks completely.

Mr. Cook: I withdraw the word "drunken", Sir.

Mr. Pike: In their determination to voice their opposition to the motion, Conservative Members seek to raise matters that are not relevant to the debate. We have heard a reference to named Members being disciplined. On many occasions, Mr. Speaker, you have said that when hon. Members speak in the House they are responsible for their own speeches. Therefore, whether justified or not, what hon. Members do is not within the control of Opposition parties. Again, we have been led along a false path.

When the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) referred to the funding of parties, he was clearly confusing two separate issues—the funding of political parties outside the House, which is certainly nothing to do with the motion, and the funding of an Opposition, the issue that we are debating. In any democracy there must be an Opposition consisting of one or more parties.

Mr. Barron: The money that we are talking about tonight is nothing compared with the cost to the taxpayer of the Whitehall machine which has been subverted for a party-political cause.

Mr. Pike: I shall deal with that later.

When this move was introduce in 1975 it recognised that within the workings of Parliament—I emphasise "within the workings of Parliament" because that is what the motion is about—the Opposition must have good sound working machinery for there to be a democracy.

The measure sought to ensure that the Opposition could play their role in the proper functioning of Parliament. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly those on the Treasury Bench, will recognise that the Opposition have it within their power to make the procedures of democratic government grind to a halt. If items that usually go through on the nod were debated, the system could fail.

If we want an efficient Opposition and if we want to counter that massive amount of money that my hon. Friend said a moment ago is there to support the Government machinery, it is fair and right that the Opposition should at least have some funding. That will ensure the continuation of parliamentary democracy, over and above the Executive. I am sure that Back Benchers on both sides of the House will want to ensure that this House has a voice to debate issues and exercise its powers in a proper manner at all times.

11.22 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): It is interesting that for the first time in the four years that I have been a Member of the House the cost involved in an amendment has not been mentioned. It has become a feature of Government contributions that we are told how much we are taking from the taxpayer.

Mr. Skinner: The maximum of £450,000 is to be raised to £500,000, the difference being £50,000, which is about the amount that the Secretary of State for the Environment lost on the reprinted Housing Bill.

Mr. Hayward: Or that the closed-shop printers have lost on the Bill.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I hope that it is a general principle in the House that Ministers of the Crown are responsible for whatever happens. No one can blame the printers for not removing the word "Restricted" from the document.

Mr. Hayward: We are considering the position of the main Opposition parties. I stand to be corrected, but my calculation is that it will cost the Government between £20,000 and £25,000 extra in contributions to the main Opposition parties. That may not seem a large sum of money compared to the sums that we deal with in the House on a day-to-day basis, but my calculation is that it is a year-on-year increase of between 15 and 17 per cent.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Perhaps I could help the House. I have been reading carefully the resolution of 20 March 1975. It covers the problem that may arise if the Liberal party decides to form a new party and if any part of the SDP decides to join that new party. We may be able to save the taxpayer some money. I ask the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), the only Member of the Liberal party here at the moment, to take due note. Paragraph 3 of the resolution says:

"it shall be a condition of qualification for such assistance that a party must either have at least two Members elected to the House"——

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The trouble with a long intervention is that it almost seems like a speech. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention. Will the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) ask his question?

Mr. Wallace: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have listened to the many contributions giving advice on how we might merge parties, which I hope we will do——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Wallace: It is a hypothetical situation and, therefore, should be ruled out of order.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member for Dorset, South bring his intervention to a close?

Mr. Ian Bruce: May I advise my hon. Friend that paragraph 3 says:

"it shall be a condition of qualification for such assistance that a party must either have at least two Members elected to the House as members of that party at the preceding General Election"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is enough.

Mr. Hayward: I thank my hon. Friend for an intervention which may be longer than my contribution.

What I do not understand about the extra sum of money that we are being asked to give to the main Opposition parties is why this must be dealt with tonight? As the Leader of the House said, we are in the process of a review. It is not as if there will not be an opportunity in the near future to decide how we fund each of the Opposition parties. Why, then, bring forward one change as an interim measure?

Mr. Grocott: It is simple. The formula as agreed by the House is being applied to the new figures after the general election.

Mr. Hayward: If the formula were applied to the results of the 1987 geneeral election according to the decision of the House on 20 March 1975, the limit which the main Opposition parties would be up against is in the proviso which it is suggested we should delete, that is, that the maximum sum of money should be £150,000. I do not understand why we should vote on one amendment when a review is being undertaken. Following the review, a motion on which we can vote will be put to the House at some time in this parliamentary Session. As has already been said several times, the main Opposition parties do not warrant any increase in allowances. When the vote was taken in March 1975, allowances for hon. Members were small. They are now substantially larger per Member, so all Opposition Members have already had a substantial increase in their allowance, which make them in theory at least more effective Members of an Opposition. We have only to refer back to the last three weeks to see how much more effective those Members have been. That is why we should not vote on one amendment when we shall have the opportunity in the near future to vote for a complete review. We should wait for that, and not vote this evening.

11.30 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am not at all surprised by the attitude of Conservative Members. I have felt as though I was in a circus tonight, with all the clowns on their Benches. Their attitude has been appalling. One day, that lot of Conservative Members will find themselves on the Opposition Benches.

We have had experience of some of the young lads from the Conservative Benches in the Committee that is discussing the Employment Bill. They have made larger contributions in the Chamber than they have upstairs in Committee. They give me the impression that they still have their nappies on and are wet behind the ears.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). All that he could talk about was the money for Opposition parties that is being proposed by the Leader of the House. I agree with the Leader of the House on this matter, and I shall vote with him. The hon. Member for Orpington forgot that the taxpayer is paying for the Treasury Bench, too. When it comes to money being provided for the Opposition, how can we compete with the Conservative Benches, which are full of millionaires?

We know where Conservative Members get their money from, too. I received a letter from the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). In fact, I received two letters from him, begging for money for the Conservative party.

Hon. Members have spoken about quality. I maintain that the quality on our side has been considerably enhanced in the wake of the last election. I also suggest that there is a lack of quality on the Government Benches. We shall find out where this money should go after the next election, when some of that lot — Conservative Members — find themselves in our position. The problems of inequality for Labour Members and the problems of voting were mentioned in the context of the Friday debate, but the fact that the Government rolled in the payroll vote was not mentioned. They do not deny that now, but they did on Friday. The Government pulled a fast one last Friday.

I agree with the suggestion that money should be paid according to results, and with my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) who suggested that we clock in. I would be on overtime every day.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has had a fair whack and intervened many times today, while I have sat here quietly.

The point is about giving hon. Members a fair hearing. We get most rabble rousing from Conservative Members when there is a Labour Member on his feet or when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition is at the Dispatch Box. They glory in it, but they ought to be ashamed of themselves, start to find their parliamentary manners and have respect for the Chair—as I always have. I have always had respect for the Chair and always will, and it is high time that that lot over there did as well.

I know that I have wandered from the amendment, but, because I have respect for the Chair, I shall come back to it. The arguments that Conservative Members have made are not fair. I believe that the Opposition parties are doing a first-class job. It is that lot over there which are sliding down the hill to hell. They will lose the next general election, and they will then realise why.

11.35 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I wish to speak as a member of a small minority party in the House.

It is important that the Government take on board the fundamental right of minorities to speak in any democratic establishment. We in the Scottish National party and in the Plaid Cymru have tried to observe the rules of the House carefully and to work hard at scrutinising the work of successive Governments. We have had access to what has become known as Short money. Rather than consider the tenuous and dubious routes down which the House has

been taken tonight, perhaps we should consider accountability and how effectively the money is used by Opposition parties.

I was in the House in the 1970s when Short money was introduced and we were congratulated on using it to employ staff in the House to enable us to examine legislation, ask questions and be a more effective Opposition—unlike the then Conservative Opposition, which appeared to pour the money into Central Office coffers for party political purposes. Opposition parties should be expected to explain to the House and taxpayers how the money is spent.

The rights of minorities are fundamental to any concept of democracy. We have not arrived here by any strange methods. We have contested seats in elections on the same basis as every other political party. We are here because we have the hearts, minds and votes of electors. We try to represent them, and any money that is given to us will be used to ensure that we represent them as effectively as possible.

It is unfortunate that some of the debate has been clouded by cheap political points that bring the system into disrepute with people outside who do not understand the workings of this place. Moreover, Opposition parties and Back-Bench Members of the governing party do not have the facilities which many of our counterparts in Europe and the United States enjoy. Short money goes a small way towards meeting that problem. It embodies a concept which we should respect and adhere to, and we should not cheapen it with some of the nasty remarks that have been made tonight.

11.39 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Opposition Members may be surprised to hear that I believe that there is a case for public money being given to Opposition parties to support their role in the House. A loyal Opposition is an important part of the British constitution. As a very strong and perhaps Right-wing Tory, I also believe in value for money. I was surprised that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House did not speak about value for money and performance indicators. It is important that when we give money to the Opposition the public should have that right to judge how the money is spent.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) talked about payment by results. That is a good old Liberal principle that was introduced by Robert Bow in 1862 in education. We all know what happened then. In every school in Britain, when inspectors came to judge payment by results, all the children chanted parrot fashion what they had been told by their teachers. That is what we get from the Opposition every day. We are getting payment by results in terms of parrot fashion squawks every day in debates in the House.

We ought to have a look at the performance indicators by which we can judge the Opposition. I suggest that we first look at the quality of speeches. It is interesting to look at the number of research assistants allocated to Opposition parties. The SDP, which is not represented in this debate, has four reseach assistants for each of its Members. Even with the assistance provided by those people beavering away, hon. Members in the SDP do not even turn up to speak. Therefore, we have a right to question why that money is being spent.

The quality of speeches from the Opposition is lamentable. They show appalling research and a lack of knowledge on the part of the speakers. Earlier the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) talked about the Health Service. There was not a single fact in his speech about his own health authority. He did not tell us about the nurses and doctors that it has and how many operations they carry out.

Mr. Frank Cook: If the hon. Gentleman has any capacity for recall and retention, he will remember that I threw away about three quarters of my prepared statement in order to allow other hon. Members—such as the hon. Gentleman—to speak. Whether other hon. Members spoke is not a matter for me; it is for the Chair. I was sufficiently gracious to allow time for other hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman ought to be sufficiently gracious now to acknowledge that and should not make snide remarks.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member has a very short memory, because I recall that he spoke for at least 17 minutes and made many assertions from a word processor speech. He did not give us any facts about the North Tees authority. That is what we are looking for. If Opposition Members make speeches in which they attack the Government, they should carry out research and make proper, methodical speeches.

Let us consider what happened at Question Time. The Leader of the Opposition is paid a salary. Twice a week at Question Time he is beaten over the head by the Prime Minister because she does her homework while he asks glib questions without carrying out research.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Hot air.

Mr. Bennett: As my hon. Friend says, it is hot air.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the payment given to the Leader of the Opposition has nothing whatever to do with the Short money that is aid to Opposition parties and to Back-Bench Members?

Mr. Bennett: I entirely agree with the hon. Member, but of course I am dealing with the principle of spending money on the Opposition. I want to see value for money. The Opposition spoke about voting. Any hon. Member who looks at the Division lists will see time and again that the Opposition disappear when there is a crucial vote. We remember what happened on Friday and what happened on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. If we had a performance indicator on votes, the Opposition would lose out on that.

Mr. Wallace: There is general agreement that a good democracy depends on a good Opposition. The logical conclusion of the hon. Gentleman's speech seems to be that money paid to Opposition parties should in some way be conditional on how the Opposition operate. It is a dangerous principle for the Government to attach conditions about how the Opposition should operate within the bounds of order.

Mr. Bennett: I do not think that the hon. Member understands what I am saying. I am talking about——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to order [20 November.]*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

[Mr. Bennett]

That the Resolution of the House of 20th March 1975 shall have effect with the omission of the proviso to paragraph (2) of that Resolution.

PETITION

Abortion

11.42 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I wish to present a petition on behalf of more than 2,000 of my constituents, who are members of every Christian church in Macclesfield.

My constituents share my view and that of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists that it is wrong in principle for doctors, counsellors and agencies who refer women for abortions to have any financial interest in the clinic or hospital in which those abortions are performed. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, will be aware that that is the subject of the Abortion (Financial Benefit) Bill which is before the House. The petition says:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House in this, the 20th year of operation of the Abortion Act 1967 does enact legislation to sever financial links between doctors and agencies who refer women for abortions and the clinics in which those abortions are performed.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

To lie upon the Table.

Helsinki Agreement

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

11.46 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Although the first Member of Parliament for Hendon, South was elected in 1945, both of my predecessors had represented another constituency before they had the honour to be elected for Hendon, South and so, 42 years after the constituency was formed, I am making the first maiden speech as an hon. Member for Hendon, South. I do not know whether that is a record, but I suspect that it is. I suspect that my wife hopes that the next maiden speech of an hon. Member for Hendon, South is made within 42 years.

First, I pay tribute to my two predecessors, the late Sir Hugh Lucas-Tooth and Peter Thomas, now Lord Thomas of Gwydir. Hugh Lucas-Tooth enjoyed the unforgettable experience of serving in a Churchill Government, and he served Hendon, South with distinction and devotion.

I should like to pay particular tribute to my immediate predecessor. Before the general election I knew how widely he was respected within his constituency. Since the election I have discovered how widely he is respected on all sides of the House. Peter Thomas served his country with courage in war and with distinct dedication and patriotism in peacetime. In the constituency, he was tireless in working for his constituents, and in the House he specialised in foreign affairs and in serving Wales, his native country. It was appropriate, not only that he was the first Conservative Secretary of State for Wales, but that when he became a Peer recently—that peerage gave great pleasure to all in his constituency—he chose the title of Lord Thomas of Gwydir, which reminded him of the home of the Welsh Office as well as the village where he spent many pleasant days as a young man.

Hendon, South nestles between the constituencies of Brent, East and Finchley. It is famous for the quality of its education. The people of Hendon are proud that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) was educated in the centre of the constituency at Hendon county school. The high standards that prevailed then still prevail in the education service in Hendon. Barnet has some of the best A-level results in the country, and standards are so good that 4,000 pupils a day come into Barnet from neighbouring boroughs; 1,300 of those come from Brent.

My constituency is famous for Brent Cross, which is a wonderful example of co-operation between a private developer and the local authority. It has created a shopping precinct with the variety of Oxford street without the associated traffic problems, and in its several years of operation it has been very successful in creating thousands of jobs. Hendon, South can also boast the most attractive conservation area of London, in the Hampstead garden suburb.

Many of my constituents were either victims of Nazi persecution or have relatives who were victims of the Holocaust. It is therefore natural that they should have an empathy with and sympathy for those who are suffering in the Soviet Union today.

Many people are confused by glasnost. They ask what worries us when leaders such as Shcharansky, Nudel and Josef Begun have been given exit visas. They say that the number of exit visas granted has gone up. Perhaps 10,000

will be allowed out this year, but that 10,000 compares with a peak immigration figure of 60,000 in 1979, with an estimated 40,000 long-term refuseniks and with 400,000 who have received invitations from relatives in Israel. For every one person allowed to go, 39 are left behind.

I received a letter the other day which summarised the plight of the refuseniks. It said:

"Don't believe what you hear. Whatever it seems like in the West, life here for us is quite different and I have nothing to lose."

The problems of the refuseniks were summarised by someone who visited me in the House three weeks ago. Felix Abromovich, aged 23, told me that he had been given his exit visa but that his parents, who had first applied to leave 17 years ago, were still being prevented from leaving the Soviet Union. One could cite many cases of individuals who applied to leave long ago but are still not being allowed to go.

Even worse is the way in which the Soviet Union is dividing families. One example is the case of Mr. and Mrs. Lein of Leningrad, who first applied in 1978. Their daughter, son-in-law and two children have been allowed to leave but they have not. Thus, grandparents are prevented from seeing their grandchildren.

Another example is the case of Mr. and Mrs. Khassin of Moscow, who applied to leave in 1976. Their mother has been allowed out, as have their daughters, but not them. Thus, when Mrs. Khassin's mother died, their daughter was not able to attend the funeral, and the grandparents have not seen their second grandson.

There is a society which separates husbands from wives, grandparents from grandchildren, parents from children, fathers from sons, mothers from daughters, brothers from sisters and even prevents parents from attending the funeral of their own son.

Apart from the failure to grant exit visas to those who want to leave, the Russians have broken the principles of Helsinki by persecuting the Jewish community. Those who seek to apply get themselves into a catch-22 situation; if they apply for a visa they lose their jobs and are then charged with parasitism, because they do not have jobs. Only this week in *The Guardian* we read that Josef Begun had his telephone cut off by the Russian authorities because they did not like what he was doing.

I received a letter from a Mrs. Khuzgina, whose husband is still in the Soviet Union, saying:

"Immediately after requesting an exit visa, Boris was dismissed from his job. The KGB constantly harass my husband and the search his apartment frequently. Boris has been the victim of anti-semitic obscenities as well as the other hardships to which refuseniks are subject, and it is difficult for him to observe the tenets of his faith properly."

That is the sort of condition that people in the Soviet Union have to put up with.

Mr. Gorbachev said in Paris in 1985 that, in secrecy cases, the secrecy classification would be removed after between five and 10 years. But let us look at how it works in practice. Let us take the case of Mr. and Mrs. Fiskin of Moscow. Mr. Fiskin left his job as an engineer in 1972, 15 years ago. He is still refused permission to leave, because of the secret knowledge that he allegedly has. I was told by the Soviet ambassador that Mr. Boris Chernobilsky could not leave the Soviet Union because he had knowledge of matters pertaining to the national security of the Soviet Union, but he knows nothing of what has happened since 1976. Mr. Pavel Abramovich left a technical institute in 1971, 16 years ago. He is still being told that, on grounds of secrecy, he cannot leave.

Are the Russians really saying that there has been no change in Russian technology since the 1970s? If that is so, I suspect that whatever people may have known in the 1970s is worthless, because we in the West have certainly moved on.

This afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that Mr. Gorbachev would be stopping off in this country next week. When she met him earlier this year, my right hon. Friend was able to present him with a number of cases of divided families, and I am pleased that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State was able to tell us in a written answer recently that a large number of those had now been given an exit visa, and were enjoying freedom in Israel.

I very much hope that, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister meets Mr. Gorbachev next week, she will be able to give him further examples and ask him to consider them. It is appalling how individuals in the Soviet Union are being denied the rights that they were given, or thought that they had been given, at Helsinki.

I received a letter from the Soviet ambassador on 2 September last year, in which he said:

"all parties to the Helsinki Final Act have an obligation to comply with it and its human rights provision."

It is high time that the Soviet Union carried out what is said in that letter.

11.57 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad, Mr. Speaker, that on this rare occasion you were able to be present for an Adjournment debate and to hear a most distinguished maiden speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). My hon. Friend comes to the House very well qualified to carry on the high standards of representation which, as he rightly pointed out, his constituency has had, not least from Lord Thomas, who was a well-regarded—indeed, well-loved—figure in the House, and who will be missed. He will, however, be a very welcome Member in the other place.

My hon. Friend spent some years as a lecturer in economics at two of our leading universities. He then worked in the City as a stockbroker, and spent eight years in the European Parliament. That range of talents will enable him, not merely to serve the interests of his constituents with great ability, but to make a distinguished contribution to our debates here. Certainly he could not have started more auspiciously than he did tonight with the case that he advanced—one that will, I am sure, find sympathy with all who hear and read about it. Having spoken in my hon. Friend's constituency a few weeks ago, I know the matter to be of great concern to many of his constituents, in the light of their background and the fact that the relatives of so many of them suffered in the manner that he so eloquently described.

The Government's position on the matter is clear and we welcome any opportunity to set it out. The last such opportunity was in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 24 July. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South has given me an opportunity to give the House up-to-date information on these key human rights issues.

[Mr. David Mellor]

Discussions are continuing in the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe process in Vienna, which I had the opportunity to address in September. We hope that the CSCE process will make real progress towards enhancing security and co-operation in Europe. As my hon. Friend knows, several headings—or baskets —reflect the issues covered in the Helsinki Final Act. Basket I contains the general principles regulating affairs between states—sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and the like. It also covers military security. Basket II deals with economic co-operation, science and technology and the environment, which are all important issues. Basket III, with which my hon. Friend was primarily concerned, sets out the standards applying to human contacts, information, culture and education. It has long been our aim to maintain a balance between those disparate aspects of the CSCE process to ensure that none of them lags behind the other.

In that context, we are not concerned only with what happened at Helsinki 12 years ago. Other CSCE texts contain important political commitments, especially the Madrid concluding document and the document of the Stockholm conference. They take the Helsinki process forward.

Following what my hon. Friend said, I wish to consider, first, the areas where Soviet compliance has been broadly satisfactory and, secondly, the areas where the picture is much worse. On the day when it is announced that General Secretary Gorbachev is coming to the United Kingdom, it is right to make it clear that I am not interested in a propaganda exercise. That would serve no real purpose. Our concern is not to make cold war points, but to consider objectively which commitments have been fulfilled and which have not. The judgment that we reach on the Soviet Union's willingness to honour its obligations, solemnly entered into at Helsinki, will inevitably affect our view of the Soviet Union and weigh with us when considering other arrangements. We should give credit where it is due. Not to do so would be hypocritical and would weaken our case where we have good grounds for saying that the Soviets have failed to behave as they should.

On military security, recent press reports gave details of the Purple Warrior exercise, which Warsaw pact observers attended pursuant to the 1986 Stockholm conference. It is too early to make definitive judgments about the extent to which the Stockholm document will enhance European security arrangements and reduce mistrust, but it appears to have taken steps down that road and the Soviet Union and its allies are abiding by the commitments that they made.

Soviet performance in relation to basket II matters—the economy—has had positive aspects. There have been several interesting developments in the Soviet economy with a view, not least, to attracting Western investment.

Even in the crucial area of human rights and contacts, as my hon. Friend said, the story on implementation is not all negative. Some prisoners of conscience have been released, including some key dissident figures. We have seen the gradually increasing relevance of press and television to real life; the beginning of a cultural thaw in the arts; the rewriting of history to correspond more closely to what happened; and increases in German and Jewish emigration. A significant number of the longer-term refuseniks have, at long last, been permitted to leave the Soviet Union. But many of those piecemeal changes have still to be institutionalised, and what has been done could be reversed or may not be part of a long-term trend. That is why we must remain vigilant. But let us combine realism with open-mindedness: that is our approach to the Soviet Union.

Sadly, it is time to come to the debit side of the balance sheet. If our first guideline is to give credit where it is due, the second is not to close our eyes to the disparity in many areas between Soviet undertakings and Soviet performance.

Implementation of CSCE commitments is at its worst where there are contacts between people and the free flow of information. In Afghanistan, for example, the Soviet Union remains in breach of all 10 fundamental principles of the Final Act. Let me yet again call on the Soviet authorities to fulfil their international commitments by the complete withdrawal of all troops from Afghanistan, rather than by merely expressing readiness to do so. Let us see a concrete example of "new thinking" in action on the international stage. Nothing could do more to bridge the gap between Soviet words and deeds.

The internal picture within the Soviet Union is still generally grim. I noted some positive developments during my hon. Friend's speech, but, as he said, the momentum appears to be slackening. Hundreds of political prisoners still remain incarcerated. Officially, the existence of "political prisoners" as a category is often denied. It is said that the people in question are imprisoned for crimes against the state. Too often this boils down to the fact that they have dared to speak out in an independent way. The repressive penal legislation under which they have been charged continues in being.

In the context of the debate, one of the most pertinent abuses is the detention of Helsinki monitors. People such as Viktoras Petkus of the Lithuanian group, Levko Lukyanenko of the Ukranian group, and Sirvard Avagyan, who worked closely with the Armenian group. This should perhaps not surprise us in a country where a KGB officer is on record as calling the Helsinki Final Act an "anti-Soviet document". I find it particularly shocking, none the less. For Anatoli Marchenko, who died in a labour camp at the end of last year, any change in the system will come too late. For others, theoretical freedom of religion remains just that — theoretical. My hon. Friend has said eloquently that Jews, Christians, Moslems and others are still harassed. Only three weeks ago, in a previous Adjournment debate, I had the opportunity to review the fate of the Baptist, Anna Chertkova, who was detained for 14 years—not in a prison, but, even worse, in a psychiatric hospital—for her faith. Her case serves as a reminder that psychiatric abuse persists on a wide scale.

Although emigration has increased, there is still no guaranteed safeguard against arbitrary decisions. Many thousands of individuals have been refused permission to emigrate, in clear contrast to the international commitments undertaken by the Soviet Union. As my hon. Friend made clear, these refusals go back many years. He quoted some cases from the early 1970s, and sadly these are not exceptional. While waiting for permission to leave, individuals are often left in limbo. Having lost their jobs,

they are unable none the less to leave the Soviet Union to pick up the threads of their life once again somewhere else. That is a further cruel blow.

Changes in emigration laws published last January by the Soviet Union suggest that the gates are likely to slam shut again when all who can claim close family ties overseas have gone. Often the reason given for refusal of permission, as in the case that my hon. Friend quoted, is that of national security. When this argument is applied to second-generation refuseniks, because of state secrets allegedly in the possession of their parents, we see just how ludicrous it is. Often that restriction continues for far longer than anyone could believe credible. Even if we accept for the moment that it is right that a state should be able to refuse one of its citizens permission to leave because of the work that he has done, for how many years does that restriction credibly continue? Surely not for 15 years, as in the case to which my hon. Friend referred.

Restrictions on freedom of movement extend also to those who wish to travel temporarily, for personal, recreation or business reasons. They permanently divide families split between the Soviet Union and elsewhere. They prevent young people from marrying, or those already married from being united.

What are we doing about all this? There is our third guideline. We must continue to use every suitable opportunity to convince the Soviets of our strength of feeling on these issues and to bring home to them that fair words without deeds cannot pull the wool over our eyes.

The CSCE is the most appropriate forum in which to discuss the issues. However, as my hon. Friend says, whenever senior figures from the British Government meet their Soviet counterparts, invariably a list of names is handed over and, to be fair, progress is made on a number of those cases. That progress is slow and wearisome, but we must be grateful for such progress. It is with the Vienna part of the CSCE, which is specifically designed to build on the Helsinki agreement, that we must hope for the greatest changes.

We contend that steady, continuous progress towards full compliance with Helsinki commitments is essential for the credibility of the process. To achieve this, our delegation has tabled, together with our confreres in the other western countries, proposals intended to strengthen existing commitments; and we shall keep up the pressure for improvement even after the Vienna meeting has concluded. They include proposals on freedom of religion; on freedom of movement; and on respect for the privacy and integrity of mails and telecommunications. We have also been associated with a number of initiatives for CSCE meetings after Vienna. These include our proposals for renewed negotiations on confidence and security building measures; for an information forum in London to deal with the crucial question, freedom of the media; and for an ambitious three-stage action programme on human rights and human contacts. The latter provides for continuous review of unsatisfactory performance in these areas between major CSCE meetings.

When we finally get a concluding document in Vienna, I hope that these proposals will find their way into that document. Acceptance of them by the Soviet authorities would be a sign that "new thinking" was not merely another political catch-phrase but that they truly intend to change the arbitrary nature of Soviet rule, and they are now prepared to fulfil those commitments that they freely undertook some 12 years ago.

The Vienna meeting is now in its final, drafting phase. However, I fear we will not see rapid results. The past few months have been characterised in Vienna by a good deal of "old thinking". We have been treated to the most blatant demonstrations of Eastern foot-dragging, combined with promises of flexibility. What we need now is plain speaking, not evasive diplomacy.

I visited the Vienna meeting when it resumed in September. I tried in my speech to say bluntly, "No human rights; no genuine security; no deal". That must be the Western approach. I believe that my hon. Friend and his constituents will support us in that approach.

Yes, we give credit where it is due, but we will not forget the massive abuses that remain. We will take every opportunity of contact with leading Soviet citizens, who, I am glad to say, come in increasing numbers to Britain. We welcome that. We must speak frankly and candidly and we will press our message home.

This House — a House dedicated to freedom of expression and freedom of individuals — will always produce Members such as my hon. Friend who will use the opportunities that we have to raise crucial issues of individual freedom in debate. I am glad to have had the opportunity to try to advance that process by answering some of my hon. Friend's questions tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 27 November 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Freedom of the Press

9.34 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I beg to move,

That this House considers the freedom of the Press to be a vital part of the democratic process; and expresses its concern that some aspects of current legislation, combined with the present concentration of ownership of the Press and the falling standard of honesty and integrity of some newspapers, indicate a need for Parliament to enact legislation designed to enhance and protect the freedom of the Press.

This debate comes at a timely and appropriate moment, in view of some of the court cases that are now under way. My motion is not intended in any way to be an academic one. We can get caught up in all sorts of arguments about the definition of freedom of the press. I am not concerned about that. We all know that something is going seriously wrong with the press in our country, and we need to examine that carefully because there is general agreement that a free and open press is essential to a vibrant, healthy democracy. We are in danger of losing that for a number of reasons, some of which my motion touches on.

New technology is another factor that is changing the press. Many people in the newspaper industry know that, and I do not intend to dwell too much upon it. Politicians must be careful when speaking about the press. We have an ambivalent relationship with it. At one point we seek its favours; at another, we condemn it for what it said or did not say. I think it was Enoch Powell who said that politicians have the same relationship with the press as sailors have with the sea—for a sailor to condemn the sea would be nonsense.

I am concerned about the selectivity of reporting, which was what originally drew my attention to the problems that were beginning to emerge in the press quite a few years ago. My interest grew because of the nature of the reporting of crime. We have known for some years that the fear of crime is greater than its reality. People are more afraid of being victims of crime than is justified by the statistics. The discrepancy is often great, and I asked myself why that should be so. One of the primary reasons is purely environmental — run-down, ill-lit, badly designed inner-city areas, and so on. However, that is not the only reason.

I was alerted to the problem when three elderly ladies in my constituency referred to three murders in Shepherds Bush at a public meeting about eight years ago. I knew of only one, and asked them why they thought there had been three. Back came the reply that they had been reported in the local paper. I checked that paper. In the relevant period, there had been one murder, but three headline stories about it—one when the crime was committed, one when the man was charged and one when he was sentenced. I then counted the number of crime stories in one of my local papers and found that between one third and one half of all news stories were crime-related. That seemed vastly out of proportion to real life in Shepherds Bush.

I then discovered that the borough of Camden had done a more scientific survey of how its local papers reported crime. It found that the percentage of news stories related to crime varied from 7 per cent. in one paper to 60 per cent. in another. A further breakdown of the figures showed that violent or sexual crime was given greater emphasis than were more commonplace offences, quite out of proportion to the real risk of being a victim of such crimes. As usual there was little effort to explain crime or criminal behaviour in any terms other than moral ones. It seemed to me that crime reporting relied on picking out incidents that were uncommon and presenting them as stereotypes against a background that is supposed to represent normality. But that normality is defined by the media. This area is a minefield, because in some inner-city areas one in four households has been afflicted by burglary. Nevertheless, crime reporting can be misleading because of the quantity of stories reported and the way in which they are selected and emphasised.

This brings us to one of the contentious areas of press reporting. One of the problems that has emerged in recent years has been the incredible emphasis placed on the type of story that deals with sex, violence and the royal family. I have never ceased to be amazed at the way in which papers such as *The Sun* give emphasis to sex and violence at the same time as they call for harsher penalties for offenders. That is rather like the drug trafficker attacking the addict.

Part of the explanation for such stories must lie in the desire of most of us to be excited vicariously by stories of sex and violence and to be fascinated by the secret, or, in some cases, the not so secret, lives of the famous or the infamous. Reluctantly I must accept that there is a market for such stories and we seek them in books and films as well as in the press and on television.

If all we had to worry about was the way in which the media deal with crime the situation would be intolerable, if undesirable. However, there is a political, racial and sexual prejudice that is unbalanced because the media are no longer diverse enough to reflect the many different strands of opinion in a pluralist society. The retreat of *The Times* and all that it stood for behind the razor wire at Wapping is a graphic illustration of the need for the British political parties to develop media policies. Among other things, any such policies must be designed, first, to maximise consumer choice by increasing access to broadcasting and publishing. Secondly, they should protect journalists from restrictions that can inhibit investigative journalism. Thirdly, those polices should give greater protection, through a right of reply, to groups and individuals who have been the victims of untrue statements. I shall develop those arguments later in my speech.

The concentration of the press into fewer hands—the ownership of four-fifths of the dailies and Sundays is now concentrated in the hands of four multinationals—is a cause of great concern not just to politicians and to the public, but to many newspaper people who recognise that potentially there are severe dangers for the industry.

The Rupert Murdoch News International group owns *The Sun, The Times, Today, News of the World* and the

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Sunday Times. Until March 1987 the circulation of those newspapers was 10,895,876, or 33·8 per cent. of total national sales. Robert Maxwell's Mirror Group Newspapers owns the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror* and the *Sunday People*. Those newspapers have a circulation of 9,099,466 — 28·2 per cent. of national sales. Lord Stevens' United Newspapers group owns the *Daily Express*, *The Star* and the *Sunday Express*. Those papers have a circulation of 5·2 million—16·2 per cent. of national sales.

The situation is further complicated because most local newspapers are controlled by four conglomerates — Thomson Regional Newspapers, Associated Newspapers, which of course owns the *Daily Mail*, Westminster Press, which is linked to the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, and Reed International that owns the *Daily Mirror*. That is an alarming trend because, as we have seen, proprietors interfere with editorial freedom from time to time. Therefore, they influence public opinion and control standards.

At one stage I took the view that newspapers did not influence public opinion as much as one might think on a simplistic, day-to-day judgment. However, much research now suggests that newspapers influence attitudes and values, including political behaviour. I will not give the House the full details of that research, but they are available for those who wish to study them.

It is true that many people buy newspapers for reasons other than for reading about the news. They may buy them for sport, for other entertainment or just to know what is on television. However, people are greatly influenced by headline stories if only because those stories select what is said to be the news.

The companies that control the local papers are themselves part of multinationals that have extensive interests in other media, in international banking, oil interests and so on. The media colonisation by such multinationals is, of course, dominated by News International.

The process of referring papers planning to merge to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has, in recent times, become sadly devalued. Since 1965 proposed newspaper mergers have been referred to the MMC under the Fair Trading Act 1973. That process has been discredited. In 1966 the MMC allowed Lord Thomson to buy *The Times* despite his already enormous newspaper empire. Worse still, Mr. Murdoch's purchase of *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* should have been referred but was not. The excuse given was that the papers were failing and that allows referrals to be bypassed. However, that claim was not true about the *Sunday Times*.

The latest example of the Government's determination to back the concentration of press ownership occurred when Mr. Murdoch bid for *Today* in July this year. The Government refused to refer that bid to the MMC. The Fair Trading Act needs to be amended to ensure the referral to the MMC of all large newspaper mergers. By "large" I mean those newspapers that have a circulation of more than 500,000—by no means small in terms of readership.

The commission should be able to withhold approval unless it is satisfied that the merger would not be against the public interest — in other words, reversing the present onus of proof. The commission should also consider the need for a variety of public opinion to be represented in the press. Only one application for takeover was refused by the MMC. However, in most cases Mr. Murdoch has used the escape clause of "not economic as a going concern" and that seems to cover just about everything. Indeed, I believe that a Conservative Member said that Mr. Murdoch might as well have a free pass to take over any newspaper that he wishes.

The changes that have occurred in local newspapers have been dramatic and rapid. They have varied from area to area. One of my local newspapers has improved dramatically recently and I am pleased about that. However, others have gone to the wall or have deteriorated. The scene is mixed. The worrying thing is ownership. In fact, 22 of the 78 weekly papers purchased in London are owned by Westminster Press. Westminster Press is a subsidiary of Pearson that owns the *Financial Times*, Penguin, Longman and 50 per cent. of *The Economist*. There has been recent speculation of a takeover bid by News International. Westminister Press also owns 13 free local newspapers.

United Newspapers publishes the *Daily Express*, *The Star*, the *Sunday Express* and more than 50 local newspapers. It publishes seven free newspapers in greater London and owns nearly one third of the Yellow Advertiser series that publishes another 19 newspapers. Associated Newspapers has one free newspaper and controls the *Evening Standard*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*. BET, a large multinational, owns 18 purchased papers and 16 free newspapers. Reed International owns 15 free London newspapers. Most of the other local newspapers are owned by chains often based elsewhere. For example, the Croydon Advertiser group is owned by Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers.

The free press is booming and its advertising revenue overtook purchased local newspapers advertising revenue as long ago as 1984. Some bought papers are converting to free and others such as the South London Press are setting up free newspapers to protect their territory. Camden has one interesting paper, the Camden New Journal. It is a rare example of an independent paper run by a co-operative of the work force and it has a circulation of 55,000. That paper has lasted five years.

At this stage I should like to say more, although it is hard to get the detailed figures that I require, about the ethnic minority press. That section of the press performs an important function and, in some ways, it has been a small, still voice defending ethnic minority groups against some of the more outrageous racial statements that have been made from time to time. Those newspapers manage to survive in an environment that does nothing to help them. Later in my speech I shall discuss how we might help those newspapers.

There used to be many alternative community newspapers. In that respect there used to be a flourishing radical press. Those newspapers have almost disappeared. It is true that whoever owns a newspaper tends to shift its political view. There are a number of examples of that, but perhaps the clearest is *The Sun*, which everyone now forgets used to be the *Daily Herald*. The collapse of papers such as the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Herald*, *Reynolds News* — if I remember correctly, that newspaper later became the *Sunday Citizen*—came about, if we are to accept Mr. Curran's and Mr. Seaton's book, "Power Without Responsibility", because they fell between two stools. They did not have sufficient quantity in circulation

and nor did they have the sufficient quality to attract the advertising that was necessary to fund them. There is much evidence to suggest that there is a great temptation in the newspaper world to go for the sex, violence and royal family-type story because they boost the mass quantity circulation and enable newspapers to survive.

The only alternative is to go for the quality area of the market, which is what *The Independent* and *The Guardian* have done. I welcome that. I do not want to give the impression that all is bleak. Some of the better papers cross the political divide. There is a problem for all political parties, but I recognise that *The Daily Telegraph* is a good newspaper. I may not agree with its views—I disagree with them often—but it has a much better coverage and a fairer presentation of the news than other newspapers.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It does not have a bad crossword.

Mr. Soley: As my hon. friend says, it has a good crossword. It is one of the few that I can do, so it must be a good one.

There is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that the public is sceptical about the reliability of news reporting. I remember one survey that showed that 46 per cent. of the public thought that the BBC news was not absolutely accurate. If people believe that about the BBC, I would hope that they are even more sceptical about the content of some of the newspapers. That is a healthy scepticism and it may well be a recognition that no one can report events accurately in a way that pleases everybody because we all see things from a different perspective and we have different views about them. That is why the variety is so important. Unless there is a variety of choice, one is in trouble. Almost all the present papers support the Conservative party, and that must be unhealthy and undesirable in our democracy.

Unfair and untrue reporting is one of the basic underlying problems that we face, together with the concentration of ownership and also the problem of certain Government legislation such as the Official Secrets Act. I recommend to hon. Members the University of London Goldsmith's College interim report entitled "Media Coverage of London Councils". It focused on a series of bizarre stories about the activities of local authorities in London and it stated:

"According to some press reports, Hackney council banned the word manhole as sexist; Haringey council proscribed black dustbin liners as racist; Hackney, Brent and Islington councils banned the nursery rhyme 'Baa Baa Black Sheep'; Brent is paying for a free trip for black youths to go to Cuba . . ."

It gave further examples, and then stated:

"We investigated the background to these stories and spoke wherever possible to the journalists who wrote them. Our conclusion is that not one of these stories is accurate. A few appear to have been conjured out of thin air; the rest, although loosely connected with some basis of fact, have got important details wrong and are misleading . . . A story alleging that Hackney council had banned the use of the word 'manhole' first appeared in the *London Standard* of 27th February 1986. The story was headlined, 'Taking "sexist" man out of manhole' and was attributed to a *'Standard'* reporter. The substance of the story was that the council's equal opportunities committee had proposed banning the term and that this was now council policy. The article quoted four people; an anonymous council 'spokesman'; Sewage worker Tom Jordan, Tory councillor, Joe Lobenstein and deputy council leader, Jim Cannon. . . ."

The important point is the way that a story, true or false, is picked up and the way that it then expands and snowballs:

"The story was followed up in the *Daily Star*, the *Sun* and the *London Standard* the following day. Both the *Sun* and the *Standard* carried very short pieces: the *Sun* under the headline, 'Now manhole is a dirty word', the *Standard* using the simple title, 'Loony'. The *Daily Star*, however, carried a full report of the story by a *'Star'* reporter headlined, 'Now the Lefties ban manholes'. The story is almost identical to the previous day's *Standard* report, adding only that Jim Cannon said, 'I am at the stage when use of the word man grates with me'. A *Sun* editorial on Saturday 1st March, headlined 'Not again', opined that Hackney councillors were not fit to hold public office and that: 'As for the idiot who first thought of banning manholes,' we suggest he puts his head down the nearest access chamber and keeps it there'. The story formed the subject of Keith Waterhouse's column in the *Daily Mirror* on 3rd of March."

This indicates how the problem crosses the party line, because:

". . . under the headline, 'The Silly Tendency', Waterhouse relates the story, along with some others, about Lambeth changing street names and declares that councillors are 'barking mad' and a 'gang of lunatics'. The story was also repeated in the *Cumberland Evening News*, the *Peterborough Evening Telegraph*, the *Nottingham Evening Post*, the *East London Advertiser*, the *Southend Evening News* and *Municipal Journal*. In addition, there were letters in the *London Standard*, the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Ilford Recorder* . . .

Hackney Council have never issued any instruction, memo or report about the use of the word manhole. The council does not employ, and has not in recent years employed anyone by the name of Tom Jordan. The council does have a policy of avoiding words that give the impression that a job is specifically reserved for men, and so words such as chairman, foreman and fireman are discouraged. 'Manhole' has been the subject of no discussion or decision of the council . . .

The racist bin liner is blacked.

Under the headline 'the racist binliner is blacked', Chester Stern claimed in the *Mail on Sunday* that 'black bin liners have been banned at Bernie Grant's left-wing Haringey council because the are 'racially offensive'. This was supported by an alleged statement from an anonymous 'storeman' at the north London council's central depot and by a quote from a councillor who said, 'there was no written ban on the use of black sacks' but added that the council had 'a strong anti-racist policy'. Stern ended his piece with: 'The council has now changed over to grey sacks to avoid offending West Indian workers in the cleaning department'.

The report, notwithstanding the citation of an anonymous source, is without substance. The council had not decided to ban black bin liners. Indeed, days after the article appeared, the Civic Services Committee accepted a tender from a local supplier of black bin liners, since these were the cheapest on offer. Stern, of course, could not have known about this decision, since it was taken after he wrote the report for the *Mail on Sunday*. Chester Stern was not available for comment . . .

On 9th March 1986 the *Mail on Sunday* published a small and misleading 'update' on the binliners story. Under the headline 'Race peace in the bag' on 9th March 1986 we learn that 'black dustbin liners at the centre of a council race storm are not to be banned after all'. What had previously been presented as fact was repeated as such by *Today*, is now presented as a proposal subsequently withdrawn. Notwithstanding this new twist, the *Mail on Sunday* continued to publish letters by readers who had apparently not read of the 'new' event."

The next example is the so-called freebie trip for blacks:

"An article claiming that the London borough of Brent is providing cash to black youths to visit Cuba free and that the funding is not available to whites was carried in the *Sun* on 26 February 1987. The story, billed as 'Another Sun Exclusive' was headlined 'Freebie Trip For Blacks But White Kids Must Pay. Barmy Brent Does It Again!' The story was written by David Jones. The story alleged that the council will spend at least £9,000 to make good any shortfall in the

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fundraising of the group making the trip. Those chosen to go must be unemployed, on low pay or rehabilitating after conviction for a crime . . . the group's only connection with the council is that they are affiliated to its youth community service, like hundreds of other groups in the borough (including the scouts and guides). Brent allowed them to use council premises for fund raising raffles and auctions but made it clear that they would not help to pay for the proposed trip. Blacks are not being favoured at the expense of whites. There is no youth worker called Shirley Williams in Brent. Youth worker Lesley Williams denies making the statements attributed to Shirley Williams. No one was specially chosen for the trip and there are no special qualifications such as being unemployed. When asked about his sources, David Jones refused to comment other than maintaining that he did speak to a 'Shirley Williams'. The story was repeated (anonymously) in the *Daily Mail*. The stories in the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* have, according to Caribbean Exchange, made it more difficult to raise funds, have sown racial divisions and have exerted a 'destructive effect' on the project."

On of the saddest aspects about the debate is that in the last century and earlier his century newspapers would have protected minority groups and run impressive campaigns to protect minority rights. That practice has been undermined and destroyed in recent years by some newspapers. I want to emphasise that that is one of the most serious points about the debate.

It is also significant that these reports occurred in the run-up to a general election:

"On 25 May 1986 the *Mail on Sunday's* Liz Lightfoot ran a piece under the headline 'Bernie's banter is baffling.' With the strap, 'parents fury at Caribbean Dialect Lessons.' The article claimed that 'Bernie Grant, controversial leader of Haringey council, has caused uproar over a scheme to teach West Indian dialect in the borough's schools.' . . . The story was picked up by a number of other papers . . ."

The Sun ran a leader on it and referred to the latest craze of London's Haringey council which

"'wants children to be taught West Indian dialect Creole . . . they will be understood in the backstreets of Kingston, Jamaica, and probably nowhere else in the world . . . But don't imagine that Bernie's antics will afflict only one suffering part of London. Remember he is a Parliamentary candidate for Labour at the next Election. . . . Labour is now the official barmy party.' The story also appeared in provincial newspapers, including the *Shropshire Star* under the headline 'Now time he was agoing. What I want to know' the writer asked, 'is when Bernie Grant and his friends are going? The sooner and the farther the better. That may be Double Dutch. But do you get my drift?'"

That was a nasty piece of reporting.

"This story seems to be based on reports in local newspapers on a conference held in Haringey on the subject of Caribbean languages in schools. Ten days earlier, . . . the *Weekly Herald* reported the conference under the headline 'Creole for Kids?' This correctly reported that the conference was organised by Haringey Community Relations Council, not by the London Borough of Haringey as Lightfoot asserts. Moreover, the conference had the support of some black parents' groups, and was not simply universally opposed as the *Mail on Sunday's* report insisted. This aspect had come out quite clearly in the *Times Educational Supplement's* report on 23 May on the conference, 'Black parents in Creole campaign.' When contacted, Miss Lightfoot claimed that her report had been cut, and so may not have been too clear in its final form."

I am prepared to accept that at face value.

"On Thursday 18 December 1986, the *Sun* ran a front-page story headlined 'Swim pool guard in aids horror'".

That is an example of how the press, when it gets out of control, can whip up hysteria against a minority group consisting of seriously ill people who can be easily made scapegoats by the rest of society. Such action can end in violence if we are not careful. *The Sun* headline read:

"'Swim pool guard in aids horror. Open-Sores man dead.' The article by Phil Dampier was billed as 'Another *Sun* exclusive.' It claimed that 'batchelor Tony Jasper' 'worked for months with horrific sores over his body and blood oozing from his hands.' . . . The story was followed up by the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* the following day. The *Daily Mail* article was headlined 'Aids victim worked at swimming pool' and was written by Gareth Woodgates. Although it could be taken as suggesting that the council acted improperly in not informing staff, the article also made clear that the council felt an obligation to respect the sick man's confidence. The *Daily Telegraph* article—'Swim-pool man dies of Aids.' —by Stephen Bates, added no additional details, made the council's position clear and did not sensationalise the issue. Many of the allegations in the *Sun* article are simply untrue. Both the *Sun* and the *Mail* suggested that the man's employers allowed him to work on when they knew he was suffering from Aids. In fact, the council did not know the man had Aids when he was working as a pool-side attendant and Phil Dampier admitted as much when he wrote, 'When officers of Newham Council in East London discovered he was an Aids carrier, they moved him from pool-side duties to a ticket office in another baths.' The *Sun* stated that he had 'horrific sores over his body and blood oozing from his hands.' This is also untrue. Assistant Director of Leisure Services . . . visited the man . . . and he had blotches on his skin associated with the karposi aspect of the Aids virus. The *Sun* made much of the fact that, in his new job as a cashier, the man 'continued to handle money and deal with thousands of children.' In fact, once the council were aware that there was a problem—although they were still unclear, as to its exact nature—they discussed the man's job description with the District Health Authority, who advised that exchanging coins presented no risk to the public."

All of us who have even a working knowledge of the AIDS virus know that that is correct.

That brings me to the right of reply issue and the National Union of Journalists' code. It is a very good code. It states in connection with the reporter:

"He or she shall strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship."

Article 3 of the code refers to accurate and fair reporting and avoiding

"falsification by distortion, selection or misrepresentation."

The code refers to the importance of journalists rectifying any inaccuracy. Item 10 advises journalists not to report things in a racial manner.

The right of reply exists in a number of other countries. It has existed in France since 1874 and it exists in West Germany, Denmark and Sweden. A former Member of the House, Mr. Frank Allaun, introduced a Bill to bring in the right of reply to this country. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has a private Member's Bill on the right to reply on the Order Paper at the moment.

I have examined the digest of the Press Council decisions from 1953 to 1984. I bore in mind when examining them that in 1977 the Royal Commission on the press said that the Press Council is more concerned about protecting newspapers from the public than about raising standards. The sad thing about the Press Council is not just that it appears to be very weak, but it is naive in its understanding of the nature and extent of the problem. The "Digest of Council Decisions" states:

"Those who favour legislation on a right of reply overlook the fact that no such legislative right in any country in the world affords such an ample and effective facility for reply. Without any expense, other than his postage, and by a simple and rapid process the complainant with a just claim can secure from the Press Council not merely the publication of his reply but a fair and fully comprehensible account of how he comes to be making it."

That is not correct. Indeed, the *News of the World* refused to publish such a reply at one stage.

I have engaged in an exchange of letters. Although I do not want to go into details, I have had a good media on the whole. I have had two occasions to complain since I became an hon. Member. One incident related to a report in which there was a mistake, and I can understand how that happened. The mistake did not involve me in any way. I was wrongly reported as having attacked the police in an incident in Earls Court. Two newspapers, which I have often referred to in the debate, the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Sunday Express* wrote vitriolic editorials claiming wrongly that I did not know anything about facing violence and things of that nature. More importantly, when I asked for a letter to be published to put matters right, I received a letter from John Junor, the editor of the *Sunday Express*, who said:

"I have to tell you that you have not attempted to answer the criticism made of you by the leader. If you can address yourself solely and specifically to that criticism then I shall be prepared to look again at what you have to say."

They did not publish my letter, and not surprisingly. Sir David English, of the *Daily Mail*, wrote:

"I am perfectly prepared to publish a letter from you but I think it should be more directly to the point than the one you have sent me and more accurate in the way it quotes other newspapers' headlines."

The matter has been very disturbing.

The University of London Goldsmith's college report is very interesting. One of the most disturbing things is that certain newspapers fare badly in the report. Stories have been taken up unevenly or incorrectly and that has occurred in *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Mail on Sunday* and *The London Standard*. I know a number of journalists on those papers and some are very good and I respect them. I know other members of those papers at various levels who are very good. If the system is becoming so bad that we rely on stories that are at best distorted and at worst untrue and actually select minority groups or individuals to create hatred against, we are going down a dangerous slope.

We do not have to believe that the editors of those papers are a new form of Doctor Goebbels to recognise the danger of picking out minority groups of individuals, either racial or sexual minorities. They direct hatred and vitriol at them knowing that such feelings exist in society and they can be easily whipped up to accentuate those feelings.

Mr. Skinner: I am interested in my hon. Friend's remarks about the untruthfulness of editorials. I am not usually one to complain, but I draw his attention to the fact that during the last demonstration at Wapping many people made speeches, a lorry was overturned and, according to the television news, it caught fire. It was reported by some of the newspapers to which my hon. Friend has referred, including in editorials, that I had been at Wapping and made a speech that incited the riot. I did not make a speech at Wapping that night. I believe that those events took place on a Saturday. During the following week Conservative Members demanded that I make a personal statement about having incited the riot through a speech that I did not make.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is right. In fact, I have some knowledge of the facts involved. I know that there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who are worried about what is happening. Stories may be directed at us today, but they will be directed at someone else tomorrow. Although it may be comfortable for the Government to have the support of the press, at the end of the day they have to contain a situation in which people are getting angrier and angrier about misreporting.

A new development—one that I welcome—is that the anxiety has been expressed within the press and media and by a number of Tory Back Benchers. Another area in which the anxiety has been expressed is in the form of libel settlements. With one or two exceptions, libel settlements were relatively low during the 1970s and early 1980s. They then began to go up dramatically. This year settlements have been rocketing up towards the £500,000 level. The last three settlements have been £450,000, £500,000 and £260,000. That compares with settlements under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board where the loss of an eye is worth £12,000, rape is worth £2,750 and loss of hearing is worth £32,000. The sum of £38,000 was placed on the loss of life after the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise.

The judges and juries—particularly the juries because it is they who decide on the amount of libel — are recognising two things. When the press writes libellous stories, it has to be made to pay for the way in which it is using its power or there may be a more simple explanation in that people are aware that newspapers pay out large prizes for bingo and so on and that they can afford large settlements.

One bit of me thinks every now and again that if a paper has been running the sort of stories of which I have been critical, it deserves to pay. However, another bit of me, which I hope is the bit that will survive in the end, believes that if we allow the judges and the courts to impose libel settlements of that type — I can understand why it is happening — it will ultimately destroy any attempt by editors or journalists to do good investigative reporting because they will be scared to do so.

I said earlier that it is an insidious process for both sides of the House. From the simple loony-Left type stories it may look as if it is only the Labour party that is being clobbered. However, if we go on down this road, there will inevitably be a time when investigative journalism will die. The editor who would like to say, "You have a good story here, go ahead and do it" will look at the price of the last libel settlement and say, "Sorry, we can't risk it."

I wish to deal with the Official Secrets Act and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I could spend a great deal of time on the Official Secrets Act, but I know that other hon. Members wish to deal with it. Therefore, I do not intend to spend much time on the Zircon affair or "Spycatcher". I simply want to say what is self-evident to everyone. One of the reasons why the media have become increasingly worried in recent years is that they have seen that censorship through legislation such as the Official Secrets Act has an effect. For example, in the Opinion column of the *Index on Censorship*, August 1987, it was said:

"Had someone told me that there would come a day when a leading British newspaper would introduce a front-page article with the words 'This news report is published under British Government restrictions', I should have dismissed it as a sick joke. Yet, this is exactly what happened on Sunday, 2 August, when *The Observer* reported a speech by Labour MP Dale Campbell-Savours, in which he quoted from the book *Spycatcher* by the former MI5 officer Peter Wright . . . *The Observer* accompanied the report with a reproduction of p368 of the book, with almost half of the text 'blacked out' to conform to the restrictions. The caption read: 'A key page of the Wright memoirs as imported freely by *The Observer* from the US. Any member of the British public may order the

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book from the US booksellers for $20 plus $3 postage, and read every word. But under government injunctions we are allowed only to reproduce the above censored version."

That says all I want to say at this stage about the Official Secrets Act. There is growing recognition that that Act, in its present form, has to be replaced. The Zircon affair is another example of that.

A less well known power is that in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which enables the police to insist on being given photographs from the television or press when they want them. That led to a number of raids. I believe that the raid in the Zircon affair was carried out under those powers. I want to deal with Operation Delivery in Bristol after the Bristol riots. The police raided the *Bristol Evening Post* and the television company and took away certain photographs. I am sure that those organisations were deeply disturbed about the fact that the police thought it necessary to take the photographs. Well over 100 charges were brought, but there was only one conviction and that person received a suspended sentence. The costs were not awarded to the police because the judge said that he could not accept the evidence of one of the police witnesses.

I wrote to the Home Secretary saying that he should consider repealing the section of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act that had caused the crisis for the media in the south-west of Britain. He declined to do so. The problem is that it puts journalists and photographers at risk. If one is a journalist or photographer faced with a public order problem and the public know that photographs can be taken and used in evidence, the safest thing is not to be there or not to take photographs.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Is not the biggest menace the fact that when the police make an application it can be for unpublished and unused material and not simply for that used in broadcasts or put into print?

Mr. Soley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should have pointed that out because it is important.

The difficulty is that either the editor hands over the photographs without question, in which case he also hands over a significant amount of independence, or he does not hand over the photographs and the place is raided. Either way, it must be undesirable in a democracy. We have to draw a better distinction between reporting rights, which are an essential part of letting the public know what is happening, and the powers of the police in situations such as that.

I am sorry to have taken so much time, but as I rarely win ballots of this type I am not going to pass up the opportunity. We need to deal with the question of ownership. We need a law that restricts total ownership. Such a law operates in Italy and France. In Italy it operates on the basis of 20 per cent. of market share being the maximum for any one owner. In France the figure is 15 per cent. One can control ownership by limiting the number of newspapers that an individual or organisation owns or by the percentage of total circulation. Either of those two methods could be looked at.

We have to do something about the right of reply, which, as I have said, exists in many countries. I think that there is a strong case for an ombudsman approach. If a person did not obtain satisfaction, he could apply to the ombudsman, which might more effectively ensure that the newspaper published the material rather than declining to do so, as some newspapers have done.

The Press Council might also consider making an annual report on standards of journalism in the press generally. That could lead to much more useful debate. We should not have had to let matters slide to such an extent among some newspapers some of the time without being able to say or do anything effective about it, rather than waiting for a Friday morning debate to start stressing the concern that is felt on both sides of the House.

We should be able to subsidise new or low-circulation newspapers. The Scandinavian countries do that very successfully. Some people will say that we should not subsidise newspapers. As I understand it, however, we subsidise newspapers already, because we do not put VAT on newsprint.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Not yet.

Mr. Soley: They are working on it. However, we have accepted for many years that newsprint should be excluded from VAT.

The press has had an honourable history in this country since it began all that time ago, but in the olden days it was easier and cheaper to publish. It may now be easier technologically, but it is not cheap. If we really believe in variety of choice, we must help people in. There are several ways of doing that. One suggestion put forward by the Labour party is a media enterprise board, which bears some similarity to the Sutton Printing Corporation. Journalists can be assisted with a buy-out if a paper is being purchased by someone else, minority groups can be helped to get newspapers going and the minority press generally can be assisted.

Another important aspect is outlets. It is no good being able to produce newspapers if they cannot be displayed or sold. There is a lovely part of the Soviet constitution which gives everyone the right to print whatever he likes—but try getting one's hands on a printing press! Matters operate rather differently here, but there is a similar problem. It is difficult to get into the printing world in the first place; once that is achieved, there is the difficulty of circulating the paper. Distribution is another problem that we should consider, and a media enterprise board could be of considerable assistance in that regard as well.

The Official Secrets Act must be abolished sooner or later, and the sooner we do it, the better. We also need a freedom of information Act. It is incredible how secretive the country has become during the past 80 years, as a result of two world wars and the Northern Ireland crisis. While the reasons for that increased secrecy can be understood, if we look back to what the House, and indeed the press, did in the last century and in the early part of this century, we see that there was a much more open society than now. What is worrying is that we have allowed that openness to be eroded in a number of ways.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Before my hon. Friend intervenes, let me tell the House something that will, in any case, appeal to him. I have discovered that there is a Scottish sewage Act which prevents the disclosure of the amount of effluent being discharged. There are innumerable such examples which prompt one to ask, "What on earth is all this about?". Legislation such as the Local Government Bill, the

Companies Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act restrains journalism and other vitally necessary information.

Mr. Buchan: I did not intend to intervene on that information about the Scottish sewage Act. I wished merely to comment on my hon. Friend's comparison between the past and the present in this country. Let us examine the present position in the United States. Matters there are infinitely more open. Colonel North turned himself into a hero for a short time, but at least he was there; at least he was questioned. That does not happen here.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The United States has a good, open system, for which I give it credit. The incredible thing is that many parts of that system were copied from this country. The old reports of parliamentary committees show that not only was evidence taken from all round the country, but statements and inquiries were made which would not be carried out in the same way now. I have given the example of the inquiry by the House into the Clerkenwell riots of the late 1830s and early 1840s. The impact of the House, and the use of the press in relation to the House, were then much more impressive in upholding civil liberties and discussing rationally the role of the police.

Discussion in the press — and, to an extent, here, because we feed on the press — is becoming more and more centred on personalities rather than policies. It is worrying for any democracy if attention is focused on a person who is saying something, rather than on what that person is saying. It is always worth remembering in a democracy that today's outrageous ideas may be tomorrow's common sense. If, 100 years ago, it was said that women should be allowed in here, or even allowed to vote, it was considered an outrageous and absurd suggestion. Now, if anyone suggested the opposite, he would be in trouble. At one time people were pilloried, executed or put in prison for claiming that the earth went round the sun. Society needs healthy, open discussion, which should focus on ideas and views and not on individuals.

To protect the press, we need to reform the contempt, libel and copyright laws, all of which impose serious restraints on the development of the press that we wish to see. As I have already said, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be re-examined. People sometimes say to me that, if we go too far down such a road, it will lead to statutory guidelines for the press. I am not sure about the arguments for and against statutory guidelines; however, they have not made television broadcasting worse. Indeed, evidence suggests that many television journalists, including investigative journalists, are performing extremely well under such guidelines. While that may not be the answer for the press, I feel that it should be considered.

I hope that the debate has provided an opportunity for all of us to look openly and fairly not only at the press itself but at the way we, as parliamentarians, should achieve the sort of press that we want. We erode our democracy by stages without recognising that we are doing it. I believe that all the issues that I have mentioned are of fundamental importance to the quality of democratic life in this country. We must not become lackadaisical and allow some of what has been going on to continue.

As I hope I have made clear, I qualify my views with the belief that many good newspaper journalists make major efforts to report news as truthfully as any individual can. Nevertheless, there are the underlying problems of the concentration of ownership, falling standards and issues such as the right of reply and the difficulty of helping newspapers to get started.

I am grateful to the House for giving me the opportunity to pursue what I consider to be one of the most vital matters that affect us. I hope that, over the next few years, we can begin a rational discussion on the future, so that we may end up with a healthy, democratic, vibrant press. We want a press which, while it may criticise Members of Parliament — and have a go at individual members of the Labour party if we say or do something wrong or stupid — is based on reason and the accurate reporting of views and ideas, however outrageous they may appear.

10.28 am

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is to be congratulated on giving us an opportunity at long last to talk about various aspects of the media. If I may be forgiven for starting on a personal note, when I was first elected a lifetime ago, my ambition was to be the Assistant Postmaster General. Circumstances, however, have conspired against me, and — faute de mieux — I have become a journalist, although not the sort who keeps his foot in the door. Rather like a character in Oscar Wilde, I have written for every great newspaper — once. That is not quite true. A year or so ago I was invited by *The Sun* to write a weekly political column. I was summoned to the offices of that great national institution with my first copy in order to meet the editor of *The Sun*, Mr. Kelvin MacKenzie. I waited for some time until Mr. MacKenzie arrived, stripped for squash — in white shorts, a white shirt and a scarf around his neck. In his right hand he carried an imaginary squash racket that he swished backwards and forwards. I thought then that Rupert Murdoch's motto to editors must be mens sana in corpore sano which, for the benefit of any members of the Government Whips' Office who are present, can be translated as, "It's your vote we want, not your voices."

Mr. MacKenzie invited me to write a weekly column. He said, "What we need on this paper is class on Saturdays." That is quite the nicest thing that anybody has ever said about me. But Professor John Vincent has for years straddled the opposite ends of the political spectrum by providing *The Sun* with class on Wednesdays, and *The Sunday Times* or *The Times* with class on different days of the week. Professor John Vincent is one of those curious people whom one might never have thought existed until recently. He is a Right-wing intellectual.

I suffered from a middle-class upbringing. My poor mother always had the *Sunday Express*. It is no joke to be brought up in a household in which the only Sunday newspaper is the *Sunday Express*. Sir John Junor has much to answer for.

This is a debate about rival assertions, in that the Left is inclined to suggest that we enjoy the worst newspapers in the world while the Right is happy to assert that we enjoy the worst broadcasting in the world. The answer to these two prejudices is that the Left discerns, not without difficulty, a strong Right-wing bias in our newspapers, while the Right objects to the neutrality of the BBC and

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of the Independent Television Authority. It should be pointed out that the governors of both the BBC and the IBA have a statutory obligation to preserve the neutrality of broadcasting. They strive towards that political objective. But if only our newspapers were as good as our broadcasters, how much happier we should be.

The Sun, *The Star*, *The Mirror* and all the tabloid newspapers sell about 9 million copies a day. They are no longer newspapers in any sense of the word. They are entertainment sheets. They could be described as the best thing in fiction that the British have ever done. They are the response to what I think is a half-educated democracy. In a real and important way, even the readers of the tabloids have their doubts and are reluctant to take them altogether seriously. Those doubts are demonstrated by their equivocation. When a loyal reader of *The Sun* finally appears on a jury in a libel case, he is the one who awards the largest amount of damages against the editor of that particular newspaper.

Curiously enough, Conservative associations—from time to time I meet members of Conservative associations—go on about sex and violence in the media. I always make the point that I am in favour of the one and against the other. Yet if one looks at the rivalry or the enmity that exists between newspapers and broadcasting institutions, one finds a series of leaders in newspapers against broadcasters and broadcasting, some of which come from Murdoch newspapers with a particular axe to grind.

However, sex and violence are just as apparent, rightly or wrongly, in the newspapers as on television. Anybody who imagines that broadcasting is a media where sex is to be discovered is bound to be disappointed. If anybody wants to discover sex, he should go to the cinema or to the theatre, where there is little or no censorship. Whatever happened to the Lord Chamberlain? On the box itself after 9 o'clock—that curious watershed when our children are supposed to be in bed—then at least from time to time, when we see "The Singing Detective", we can be reminded of our lost youth.

Last night on the telly there was a programme by "This Week" that looked at the monarchy and the press. It gave me the impression that what was on trial was the monarchy, as opposed to what should be on trial—the attitude of the tabloid press towards the monarchy. Is there not a danger that the triviality that is verging upon hostility which some newspapers show, not to major but to minor royalty, may begin to undermine the respect that the overwhelming majority of people have for that institution?

What about the way that the newspapers treat the House of Commons? When I finally retire, my ambition is not to go to the other place but to become a sketch writer, because they live so high off the hog. They have an exquisite light lunch four days a week that is paid for by the proprietors of their newspapers; they arrive here at 2.30 and sit in the Gallery; by half-past 3, or a quarter to 4 or 4 o'clock on Thursdays, they adjourn for a cup of Lapsang Souchong tea; they then write their copy and go to bed. Any hon. Member who speaks either on a Friday morning or after 4 o'clock on a weekday gets no mention whatsoever.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I think that today my hon. Friend will get a mention.

Mr. Critchley: My hon. Friend the Minister has been more kind to me than I deserve.

That is partly true, because the press has been inclined to treat politics as a form of entertainment. We owe this development to Mr. Bernard Levin who in the *Spectator* in the 1950s began to treat the House of Commons as though it were some sort of zoological garden. That particular style—entertaining though it is, or can be—is at the same time deceptive. There is a legitimate ground for complaint that those of us who speak infrequently and late do not get our names as frequently as we should like into the newspapers.

We must have the cameras in this place, and as soon as possible. Any arguments from above that suggest, in headmistressly tones, that if we do not behave ourselves we shall be kept in after school and that we shall not be entitled to have cameras in this place are, I am afraid, nonsense and ought to be resisted.

The fact that we do not have the cameras in this place is extraordinary. What do we have to hide? A great deal, perhaps, but we are under no obligation to hide it. By the same token, the voter is entitled to see what we get up to. I am for ever amazed at the extent of the ignorance of the public about what happens in this place. There are even members of my association in Aldershot who believe that, having sent me back at five-yearly intervals to this place, I am obliged to sit here every day from 2.30 until 10 o'clock at night. Can the House imagine a fate worse than that? If we had cameras in this place, we should attract back into the Chamber some hon. Members who have been driven from it by some of our more regular entertainers. That could only be to the benefit of the House.

I am sorry to say that we have the press that we deserve, just as we have the broadcasting that we deserve. I hope that members of my own great party—or should I say the great party to which I belong—will be a little kinder about the broadcasters, who serve them remarkably well, and a little ruder from time to time about the excesses of the press. After all, the private lives of Members of Parliament are now fair game. Has the House ever wondered why that should be? How could Lloyd George live a life of pleasure in London and go into the pulpit in north Wales every Sunday to preach upon the sanctity of the family? How could he get away with that? There are other examples from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The great adventurers, whether Canadian or Australian, who came to this country in the early part of the century, and who bought newspapers and became newspaper magnates, wished to join the establishment of the day. People who were prepared to build large houses made of black glass were not the first to throw stones at others in public life. They wished to join the club. They had ambitions.

Today, the figures who own our great newspapers change their nationality as frequently as they change their shirt. They certainly do not live in the United Kingdom and they have no wish to be accepted by the establishment of this country. Can the House conceive of a French Government actually allowing an Australian to own a French newspaper? Such is the cultural nationalism of the French that they would make very certain that no one save a French citizen owned a French newspaper. Might we not give that some thought? Some time ago, the idea was mooted that when the independent companies' franchises came to an end, they should be put to auction. The House

can imagine who would end up with all our television companies if that happened. That idea has been dropped, thank God, and not before time.

Mr. Reston: I am listening to my hon. Friend's speech with great pleasure and interest. He says that the French would not permit foreign ownership of their newspapers but he will doubtless acknowledge that they have allowed Robert Maxwell to buy a significant stake in one of their television companies recently.

Mr. Critchley: As long as it stops there and does not extend to football, all will be well.

10.43 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Like all other hon. Members, I greatly enjoy the writings and speeches of the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) and he has not disappointed the House this morning. When the hon. Gentleman mentioned John Junor, he reminded me that I am in the rather unusual position of following in John Junor's footsteps. John Junor was the Liberal candidate for Aberdeenshire, West in 1945. Perhaps to the relief of the House, he was narrowly defeated by just over 500 votes. Consequently he was able to change his allegiance and write colourful columns about the man of Auchtermuchty. Despite Mr. Junor's best efforts, both Auchtermuchty and Aberdeenshire, West are now in Liberal hands.

This is an important debate and many of us are pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the issues that arise from it. We must acknowledge that to the general public it may appear rather an esoteric debate. The public buy newspapers and read them but I doubt whether they care very much who owns them or why. That does not mean that it is wrong for hon. Members to be concerned about the concentration of ownership that we have witnessed in recent years, because it has real implications for the freedom of the press. Each of two major proprietors now commands more than 30 per cent. of circulation. We need regulation to reduce the over-concentration of ownership but it is difficult to say exactly what that regulation should be. I am not sure that any hon. Member can be totally undisturbed that a single proprietor should command one third of circulation.

Matters could get considerably worse. I know that this may be hypothetical, or even absurd, but it is worth concentrating one's mind on what would happen if Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Maxwell decided to join forces or if one of them decided to leave the game and sell his winnings to the other. One might think that existing legislation would come into play to prevent such concentration, but there is nothing in the legislation that makes it clear that that would happen. As the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has asked somewhat sarcastically, on other occasions, is there any point in having a mechanism that refers newspaper takeovers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission when the commission has never yet refused an application in respect of a national newspaper? Many of us are beginning to question at what point the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would decide that a case justified refusal.

Only a few months ago, we debated the takeover of *Today*. I do not propose to rehearse the arguments, except to say that the Government's argument for invoking their power not to refer the case to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was that the newspaper would otherwise fold. The easiest line of argument that any business man can put forward in defence of concentrating monopoly is to say, "If I do not sell out, or if he does not buy me out, the business will fold." We need higher principles than that. After all, if the business can sustain itself only by becoming part of a potential monopoly, we are entitled to ask ourselves whether that business should be saved. Many of us believed that *Today* would have survived, anyway. There is no way that a proprietor who had had the paper valued at £36 million one day would close it the next while there was any possibility of finding a customer who would buy after the investigation—albeit at a reduced price.

One or two consequences of market domination by such a limited number of proprietors need to be considered. Such concentration enables proprietors to put considerable pressure on journalists and editors. We have seen signs that it is much more difficult for editors and journalists to resist strong proprietors, and that it requires a greater degree of courage to do so, when there is a limited number of alternative titles with which they can seek employment. At the moment, there may still be enough titles, but the time will come when the only alternative is the dole. That is a high price to pay for standing up to a wilful proprietor.

My next point relates to a straight commercial matter rather than to journalism. Such dominance in the market allows newspapers to wage circulation or advertising wars against their competitors, with a view to pushing them out of business and so increasing their own scope in the market or with a view to weakening them to the point where they can take them over. If it was clear that proprietors' ability to take over other newspapers was likely to be restricted by guidelines much clearer than those that we have at present, it might deter them from that course of action. We all know the procedures used in dealing with advertising agents whereby they are offered bulk discounts if they keep their advertising account with one group, and retrospective discounts if they agree to spend over a given period more than a certain amount of money with a given publishing group. Consequently, free competition in the market place is abused.

There is anxiety about the way in which this mechanism works. I have already expressed reservations about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the context of newspapers. I have some reservations about the commission's operations—although this debate is not about this matter—and was interested to note that its report on the takeover of British Caledonian will go to judicial review. That confirms my belief that that report was wrong.

One consequence of the change in style as well as the concentration of ownership is the greater abundance of cheque-book and law-court journalism. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) expressed concern about the size of recent damages. I concur with him, but I am concerned also about the high cost of taking libel actions against newspapers that wilfully publish mischievous reports, knowing that often they are pillorying someone who has not the slightest chance of risking the money needed to take them to court. There were mixed feelings in the House and outside it when Jeffrey Archer took his case to court. There was some satisfaction at the thought that a newspaper had been faced with such large damages, but there was anxiety because it required Jeffrey Archer's resources to take the issue that far. Many people would

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not have been able to entertain such an idea. I can understand the motivation behind the Bill of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) — the Unfair Reporting and Right of Reply Bill—to allow legal aid in libel cases in an effort to equalise the argument. I am not saying whether that is the right answer.

The issue is of concern because it gives newspaper proprietors certain opportunities. It is a matter of the balance of commercial judgment. The newspaper proprietor says, "If I can get a good juicy story about a national public figure and the circulation that I want, it does not really matter if I am taken to court. It does not matter how much it costs because, in terms of making money for my newspaper, it is an acceptable charge." If that is the standard by which newspapers intend to develop their circulation, it is a cause for grave concern.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that at the bottom of this matter is the failure to distinguish between what is genuinely of public benefit and what is merely of interest to the public, which is almost insatiable in terms of the pursuit of circulation?

Mr. Bruce: I accept that point. The problem is with editors who simply make a commercial judgment and ask, "How do I achieve this circulation?" I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is implying that if the public are willing to buy that is good enough. If he is not, he probably agrees with me that a change of standard is required.

Mr. Cash *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bruce: How we achieved that change in standard is a much more difficult matter.

The popular, mass circulation tabloids operate peculiar double standards. One is led to believe from the commercials in that super soar-away newspaper, *The Sun*, that it believes that we should have a happy-go-lucky attitude towards sex — as the hon. Member for Aldershot said, violence is another matter — but it pillories those people who conform to the image that it is trying to create. That is extraordinarily hypocritical. I would not even begin to dwell on the personal conduct of some journalists.

The circulation issue is serious but, naturally, hon. Members have concern for political issues and the political concentration on ideas. There is no doubt that the concentration of ownership in one, two or three major organisations that all have an identified, clear stance tends to supress diversity and plurality of view. Hon. Members will understand when I comment on the role of the Liberal party, or third parties. Hon. Members sometimes feel that when they represent particular strands of opinion — whether within the Conservative party or the Labour party — they are either ignored or unfairly represented. It is important to have a right of reply in some form. If newspapers wilfully misrepresent views, it is important to have the right to correct their articles and obtain fairer statements.

The right of access is importat as well. My complaint about many national newspapers is not that they are of a particulare colour in terms of their political stance. That does not worry me unduly, although I admit that I lamented the demise of *Today*. I would like some newspapers to support the alliance politically, but I do not think that the leader writer stance on a newspaper is that critical. Most readers can tell the difference, or perhaps they do not read the difference. I understand that evidence shows that readers of *The Sun* think that that newspaper supports the Labour party, which is a sign of exactly which parts of the newspaper they choose to read. My concern is with how newspapers present the news, select information and dress it up, what they omit, the general gloss put on news and the stance taken. Our complaint is frequently about deliberate omission by a particular newspaper, for clear political reason, of views that we have expressed.

I can give some recent topical examples. During Trade and Industry questions on Wednesday this week I raised the issue of the anxiety among people working in the *Financial Times*. The *Daily Telegraph* managed to report the fact that questions on this subject had been raised, the comment of the Minister of Trade and Industry and the contribution of the hon. Member for Thanet, South, whose contribution was well worth reporting, but did not refer to the fact that this was in response to questions that I initiated. Other newspapers did do that. Last week, the Scottish political correspondent for *The Sunday Times* chose to write a column on Scottish self-government, a matter that is exercising the minds of people in Scotland and the House more than somewhat. The article was written the day before the House had a full day's debate, initiated by the Liberal party, on the government of Scotland. The article dealt in a full column on the issues of the political parties in Scotland without referring to that debate or to the existence of the Liberal party or its position in Scotland. I refuse to accept that that was a fair comment. Clearly, it was a deliberate, conscious omission.

This is a debate on freedom of the press. Three weeks ago, "Week in Politics", for the second time in 12 months, had a half-hour programme on Scottish home rule and began by saying that the debate should be set against the background of the political balance in Scotland. The programme said that in Scotland there were 50 Labour Members, 10 Conservative Members and three Nationalist Members, and the discussion took place on that basis. Despite the fact that I had a meeting with Lord Thompson, the IBA chairman, the last time the Liberal party was excluded from the discussion, the party was again completely omitted from the debate. Perhaps that is enough special pleading. It reflects, however, the problems of access, rather than merely those of right of reply, which I consider to be legitimate and which lead many groups outside this place, and not only in politics, to feel that they do not get a proper hearing within the national press.

The concentration of ownership of the local press is a matter of growing concern, but if the local press is doing a job at all it is more accountable than the national press both to its readers and sources of news. That is because it needs to return to them week in and week out in a way that the national press does not. The national press is less concerned about upsetting its sources of news with inaccuracies than local newspapers.

The concentration of ownership of local newspapers is a worry because it is leading to standardisation of practice, less local news and increased syndication of national news within local newspapers. I think that the market will resolve the problem inasmuch as the public will not wish to buy local newspapers that do not have good local

coverage. Costs are important, however, because even at local level it is difficult and expensive to introduce new newspapers.

The issue that we are addressing will not go away. In this place we should always be mindful of the importance of ensuring the freedom of the press. Concern about concentration of ownership has reached the point where the Government must consider whether a clear statement is necessary, along with some legislative changes, to make matters clear.

My party and I tend to be very much against control from regulation and censorship of the press, broadcasting or any other medium. That is the principle that we adopt as a starting point. That does not mean that we fail to recognise that there is a need, regrettably, for regulation and control. Our starting point, however, is that we are not in favour of introducing regulations if we can find an alternative way forward. But—this is an important but —if we want to have a free press, and a genuinely free one, whether it is free from commercial, political and social pressures, or any other form of pressure, the press must be responsible. It must show a willingness to respond to public opinion, whether expressed in the House or in a wider arena. If it fails to do so, it becomes extremely difficult for those of us who want to uphold its freedom and right of access to information to defend it as robustly as we would like. Some areas of the popular press are not doing the cause of freedom of the press all that much justice in the way in which they conduct their affairs.

11.4 am

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am glad to have the opportunity to address the House immediately after the contribution of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who usually talks good sense in newspaper debates. I shall try to take up one or two of his arguments, especially those on concentration of ownership and the responsibility of the popular press.

The hon. Gentleman described the debate initially as esoteric, and that was a pretty accurate adjective. The motion in the name of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) reveals, as the hon. Gentleman said, the somewhat uneasy — I think that he used the word ambivalent — relationship between politicians and the press. It is something of a love-hate relationship. On the politicians' side, at least, the trouble lies with our impotence. There is virtually no ministerial responsibility for the press, and there is certainly no political responsibility for what appears in it. We are dealing with a largely unfettered and deregulated industry.

The world of government impinges upon the world of newspapers with only one weak and ineffective section of the Fair Trading Act 1973, which is in some disarray as a result of curious decisions, to say the least, by successive Secretaries of State. Against this background, press debates tend to be rather empty affairs, and not only in terms of attendance in the Chamber, in which politicians become preachers or, in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), court jesters. There are others who are complainers. Politicians tend to moralise, pontificate, joke and grumble in the knowledge that they have no power to back up their criticisms.

In his rather lengthy sermon, all 59 minutes of it, the hon. Member for Hammersmith—it could be described as his longer catechism — did zero in on the two key themes that trouble all watchers of the press: concentration of ownership and editorial standards.

The debate is timely in terms of concentration of ownership. One of the troubles with recent press debates is that they have almost always taken place after a decision has been made to change the concentration of ownership in a way that has been unacceptable to many of us. At least this debate is taking place, unusually, before the latest and pretty transparent manoeuvre of Mr. Rupert Murdoch has taken place.

As we all know, it seems that Mr. Rupert Murdoch is attempting to take over the *Financial Times*. According to the City press this morning, he has bought more shares, increasing his stake to over 15 per cent. I think that only a few individuals would accept at face value some of his statements about being a friendly investor.

We need to reflect for a moment on Mr. Murdoch's aims and ambitions. He is easy to portray as the proprietor whom we all love to hate, but he is a remarkable manager as well as a remarkable acquisitor. The fact that we have a prosperous and expanding newspaper industry for the first time in many years is largely to his credit. He was the man who, more than anyone else, broke the stranglehold of restrictive practices which were engaged in by the print unions, which were throttling both managerial and journalistic enterprise in what used to be called Fleet street.

It is unfair to portray Mr. Murdoch as an across-the-board destroyer and underminer of editorial standards, although some of his publications do, in my view, disgrace the very name of journalism. I shall say something about tabloids in a moment. Other of Mr. Murdoch's titles are publications of genuine quality whose editorial standards he has raised. I think of *The Sunday Times* in this country and *The Australian* in Australia. In the world of financial journalism—that is what we shall be talking about if we come to debate a takeover of the *Financial Times*—Mr. Murdoch has consistently spent money wisely in improving the financial pages of his newspapers by hiring good editors and journalists. We have only to consider the much higher reputation nowadays of the Business News section of *The Sunday Times* following Mr. Murdoch's takeover to realise that he has done some good somewhere in improving editorial standards.

It is clear that Mr. Murdoch believes in the concentration of ownership. Incidentally, there is nothing too new about this belief. Fleet street has often seen the concentration of ownership. We have heard this morning about the domination of the old press barons. I was reminded of the verse about two dominant families about 30 years ago. It went something like this:

> "When round the public works we looked, two pressing needs at once appeared;
>
> To dam for ever Beaverbrook, and drain the mud from Rothermere."

Many years ago it was felt that the concentration of ownership had to be reduced, and that is the feeling now, but it is difficult to know what to do about it. Mr. Murdoch has a reputation for concentrating his ownership. For example, in Australia seven of every 10 newspapers bought by the newspaper-reading public are owned by him. In the United Kingdom he has five titles —*The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun*, the *News of the World* and *Today*. If the *Financial Times* is added as

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a sixth scalp, that will, in my view, represent an unacceptable concentration of economic and editorial power.

I hope that the Government share that view. They have been pretty mealy-mouthed about their attitude to newspaper takeovers in the past. I was not the least reassured by the exchanges in which the hon. Member for Gordon and I participated on Wednesday afternoon. When pressed for a debate before a decision on the takeover of the *Financial Times* and for a clear statement that there would be a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, what did my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster say? He addressed these remarkably unreassuring words to me:

"I assure my hon. Friend that we shall apply the Act as it is intended to be applied."—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 256.]

That must take the prize for an ambiguous piece of waffle.

I am worried about the criteria on which the Government seem to decide whether to refer a newspaper takeover to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It seems that they do it by numbers, and the numbers on which they rely are circulation figures. The *Today* newspaper was allowed to be acquired without so much as a murmur from Lord Young, the lord high deregulator himself, on the ground that it represented only 2·5 per cent. of national newspaper circulation. I am worried about the *Financial Times*, which represents less than 2 per cent. of national newspaper circulation. If the Government think that numbers are the only thing that matter, why not let Mr. Murdoch have another 2 per cent.? Such an attitude needs to be warned and spoken against today.

The *Financial Times* is one of the finest newspapers in the world. It is a British newspaper that has real international stature. Long ingrained editorial standards, accuracy, objectivity and rationality shine out as beacons of excellence across the darkening scene of contemporary journalism. If there can be a case for defending the status quo in newspaper publishing, the *Financial Times* is surely a cast iron one.

The newspaper industry is a deregulated industry and Parliament cannot defend the status quo except by one feeble mechanism—the section of the Fair Trading Act 1973 that gives the Secretary of State power to refer an acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. However, the precedents are disturbing. The former Secretary of State for Trade, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), let through *The Sunday Times*, and *The Times* and I have already mentioned the debate about the *Today* newspaper. If one examines the decisions that have been taken, one might as well give Mr. Murdoch a free pass.

Mr. Renton: Before my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) leaves the point about Mr. Murdoch's interest in the *Financial Times*, it would be fair to add to his quotation the exchange in the House on 25 November, the final words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). He said:

"I share my hon. Friend's admiration for the *Financial Times*, which is one of this country's strongest journals and has a great international reputation. We shall have a duty to address the Act if anyone attempts to acquire a controlling interest".—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1987; Vol. 123, c.256.]

Mr. Aitken: Only an hon. Member who had served in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as my hon. Friend has done, could possibly rise to the clarion call of a Minister being about to address an Act.

Mr. Renton: It is crystal clear.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend may find it crystal clear. That is what comes of having a first-class degree and a track record in the Foreign Office. We humbler mortals do not find it quite so clear, but I welcome the note of hope that my hon. Friend has injected into the debate. I hope that addressing the Act means using it to refer any such acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The Minister faces a genuine problem. The case against allowing Mr. Rupert Murdoch to own the *Financial Times* is quite subtle. If, as it is rumoured, he is prepared to divest himself of *The Times* to do so, the case against Mr. Murdoch is about nuances of influence, not about the abuse of power; editorial reputation rather than editorial standards; and titles rather than circulation figures. Above all, it is about one's perception of Mr. Rupert Murdoch and his style of management, and the prejudices for and against him.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): A short while ago my hon. Friend said that Mr. Rupert Murdoch had dramatically improved editorial standards in the financial section of *The Sunday Times*. Therefore, I am puzzled by his anxiety.

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that my hon. Friend has followed my argument. I was acknowledging that because I said that this was a grey area for Ministers. It is about nuances and editorial reputations against editorial standards. I accept that Mr. Murdoch may have raised editorial standards in some of his journals, but that does not mean necessarily that he will uphold the editorial reputation of the *Financial Times*. These exchanges illustrate that these are deep waters for the grey-faced cost accountants of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Unless Parliament is prepared to step in and revise the criteria for newspaper ownership along the lines of the Broadcasting Act 1981, I fear that the *Financial Times*, which was founded by one free-booter — Brendan Bracken—is likely to end up in the arms of another. We need a reform of the Fair Trading Act and a strengthening of its provisions. Above all, we need the promise of a debate on the matter, so that the will of Parliament can speak before a national institution changes hands.

In conclusion, on the subject of editorial standards to which the hon. Member for Hammersmith referred, as usual we have the classic curate's egg. Parts of the newspaper industry's standards are rather good, and getting better. We must not forget that the last year or so has seen the birth of a really good national newspaper, *The Independent*, which has given a tremendous fillip to quality journalism in Britain. All credit must be given to the editor of that newspaper and his team, who have forced noticeable improvements on the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. What might be called the daily bread of serious journalism is probably better in Britain than anywhere else in the world. I dare to say that the same is true of weekly journalism and the provincial press. Not

until we reach the tabloids does the scene become ghastly. Should we worry about the tabloids? Who really cares whether the *Daily Star* slides into pseudo-pornography to the extent that it is becoming the "Daily Bonk? Who is worried whether *The Sun* and the *News of the World* serve up a permanent diet of excrescences of bad taste to their readers? No one has to buy those papers. In the words of Mr. Randolph Hearst,

"No one ever went bust underestimating public taste."

That is what the proprietors of those newspapers are doing.

On reflection, however, we should not indefinitely take a totally laissez-faire attitude towards editorial standards of tabloids. We should care when people get hurt by tabloid journalism. Families get hurt and institutions, such as the monarchy, can rock and sway on their foundations if they are subjected to the pressure that tabloid journalism is introducing into contemporary communication. If we do not make an effort to check the slumping standards of tabloid journalism, the situation will get worse.

My only criticism of the hon. Member for Hammersmith's speech about editorial standards is that, having headlined part of his speech with a few items of untrue and unfair reporting, they seemed to be mechanical episodes about manholes and bin liners. We must remind ourselves that ordinary people get badly hurt.

To illustrate that point, with his permission, one need look no further than my personal friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who, a week or two ago, was featured prominently in the *Daily Mail* under a headline and story which implied that his marriage was in trouble, and that his friends were worried about the strain he was under in the House as a result. That was an unpleasant and distressing story. On his behalf, I am glad to put on record that the story is a total falsehood, a wicked fabrication and a calumny. The worst thing about it is that Mr. Adam Helliker of the *Daily Mail*, the journalist who wrote the story, published it in bad faith. He had spoken to my hon. Friend and had extracted from him a robust and total denial which was completely suppressed. I know that my hon. Friend can look after himself. He has considered the option of litigation and decided not to take that expensive course, or even to bother with the toothless pekinese watchdog, the Press Council. Perhaps my remarks on the record of the House will give him some redress.

Mr. Soley: I hope that I did not give the impression that the examples which I gave were purely mechanical. They affected groups of people. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to speak about what has happened to individual citizens, but we must acknowledge that the examples about AIDS and racism pick out a group of people and whip up hatred towards them which already exists. That is dangerous, because it is so easy for politicians and others to capitalise on it. That was something that happened in pre-Nazi Germany.

Mr. Aitken: I entirely accept what the hon. Gentleman says. He was right when he referred to groups of individuals who get hurt. Time and again we have seen examples, which we have all quoted, of tabloid journalism at its most distasteful, and getting worse. I do not think that I am alone in having a sympathetic worry about the ceaseless hounding, misrepresentation and innuendo towards the Prince and Princess of Wales. Even the grandest family in the realm cannot be expected to put up indefinitely with a siege of paparazzi and what looks like a continuous smear campaign of tabloid journalism. Tabloids should realise that ordinary people are getting pretty sick of what they are reading in that regard.

However, something is stirring because here in Parliament not only are we debating this subject today, but shortly we shall debate at least two quite important Bills introduced by private Members which, for the first time that I can remember, seek perhaps to put a serious new fetter on the press. One is the Right of Privacy Bill, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), and the other is the Unfair Reporting and Right of Reply Bill. My reaction a year or two ago would have been that, in a free society such as ours, we should not need to have those new restrictions on a free press, because that is what they may amount to. But, just as in the famous legal example of Mr. Justice Wendell Holmes that free speech did not include the right to shout "Fire" in a crowded theatre, a free press does not include the right to continue to carry out some of the excesses that the tabloids have been carrying out. They have only themselves to blame if Parliament now starts to introduce legislation which it would never have wanted to introduce. Nevertheless, it is probably the sort of discussion that Parliament should have to change the scene of journalism for the future.

11.21 am

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). He and his family have strong interests in the press. I, too, have an interest on a different scale. The hon. Gentleman may have been connected with the Beaverbrook days of the *Daily Express*. I am the chairman of *Tribune* and the circulation is a little different. I agree with what the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) said about the ambivalent relationship between the House and the press. Sometimes we get it wrong. We tend to talk about balance. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who spoke for the Liberal party, referred to that. Opposition Members, often justifably, complain about it, but I am not sure that is the main problem with the popular press.

The problem is not so much the specific political views, but the trivialisation, and making ephemera of that which should matter—the quest for the new sensation from day to day and the reducing of all to common pap. We see that exemplified in relation to Conservative Members, but at least those individuals have a certain position of power so that they can protect themselves. People such as the council workers mentioned in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) do not have the means to protect themselves. Few people, unless they are extremely wealthy, can risk taking a libel action to defend themselves. Therefore, there is a personal and private aspect to the matter.

I am interested in the endorsement of *The Sunday Times* by the hon. Member for Thanet, South. He said that Murdoch had had a good influence because the Business Section was good. That is true—the Business Section has improved if we can get as far as page 54 on a busy Sunday. Perhaps it is for the same reason that the *Financial Times* is such a notable British newspaper. It is simply that those who are concerned with business, those who read the news about shares and the stock exchange, must get it

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

right. The *Financial Times* has to be good because it matters to its readers. That is why the *Financial Times* and the Business Section of *The Sunday Times* are so accurate.

There is propaganda in the tabloid press, but we do not get it in the news about business and stocks and shares in the *Financial Times* because its readers who are about to invest as a result of their understanding of the newspaper must get it right. However, when one looks at the rest of *The Sunday Times*, one cannot claim that it has improved. On the contrary, the newspaper has deteriorated badly. That is as serious as the problem in the tabloid press.

This has been a bad year for freedom. It is the centenary year of bloody Sunday, which occurred in November 1887. The police commissioners of London banned the use of Trafalgar square for meetings and demonstrations. A huge rally took place, the crowd was attacked and at least one participant was killed. That day went down in Labour history as bloody Sunday. It is interesting that that square was seen as a symbol both of the right of assembly and of freedom of speech. Now the technology has changed. The defence of the freedom of speech has changed, and in many ways it is more difficult. When ideas and concepts were spread through assembly, it was possible for a great diversity of views to be known. With expensive technologies we have seen not just a slow decay, but a sharp movement and a concentration of power and monopoly. Today, there cannot be the same response as there was to that demonstration in 1887, to draw attention to a matter. Three people — Maxwell, Stevens and Murdoch — control matters because they own 80 per cent. of the popular press. That is an enormous and terrifying triple monopoly because through the popular press should come our understanding of what is happening in the world, our knowledge on information and ideas.

Some people say that not much attention is paid to the ideas, but alongside that accretion of power in a few hands there has been a change in the social pattern. For example, there has been a huge change in work patterns. At one time, at 10.30 am or at lunchtime people gathered in various corners of the factory for their morning break or lunch. They would discuss the paper, and the shop steward would say, "That's rubbish," or the man in the corner would say, "Well, that's rubbish." There was a critical approach, not because those people were all conscious students, but because they discussed the newspaper as they met together.

That is no longer the work pattern, nor is it the social pattern that prevails in the home. People are now infinitely more isolated in their participation in the sphere of ideas than they used to be. That is one of the differences between unemployment today and in the 1930s. At that time there was a community in which the unemployed still participated socially. Now they isolate themselves and there is one vehicle, radio and television, through which they get their understanding and ideas. That is serious. Without that interchange between the purveyors of information and those to whom it is fed, all our lives and actions would atrophy. That is the problem that we face.

Let us look at the Government's response. It is no use the Minister using the phrase about addressing himself to the Act. Already there has been a takeover by Murdoch almost within 48 hours of a good popular newspaper, *Today*. What was the Government's reason for not referring that to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? The reason that they gave was that it did not matter too much. It was only 3 per cent. Like the housemaid's baby, it was only a small one. They concentrated on the 3 per cent. and ignored the fact that that gave Mr. Murdoch, one man, over 35 per cent. ownership of the popular press. It is terrifying that such concentration should have taken place.

We have seen Mr. Murdoch's powers elsewhere. Figures in relation to Australia show that he has a majority holding in publishing. Parallel with this fearsome monopoly ownership in the press, a shift is taking place in the Government's thinking about broadcasting. There are two major documents dealing with the future of broadcasting—the Peacock report and the Green Paper. The Peacock report says that new technologies have taken control and we cannot put them under control or regulation. There is some virtue in regulation because it has enabled diversity of opinion to flourish in our broadcasting system. If it had been left as it was, there would have been a monopoly and trivialisation of broadcasting. Regulation has emancipated a variety of views, programmes and political attitudes. That will no longer happen if the Peacock report is put into practice. Peacock says that as we cannot control the technology, let us lie back, close our eyes and think of London.

Peacock's reason for saying that we are unable to continue to control broadcasting in this way is that it is claimed that satellite broadcasting cannot be controlled. In other words, the basic report on which the Government are functioning in relation to television provides a total frame for the monopoly ownership of the press. Messrs Maxwell and Murdoch are buying into satellite broadcasting. Two of the three people who control virtually the whole popular press in this country are buying into satellite broadcasting. If it is unregulated—as the Peacock report suggests it will be, and which would be in line with the policies of this ideological Government who say that privatisation and private capital are all that matters—we can imagine what will be the picture in a few years' time.

This has been a bad period for the freedom of the press. We have seen the effect of Government action in relation to the freedom of the press. Let us consider what has happened to the freedom of the spoken word in broadcasting. It is not only the future about which we need to be concerned, but what has happened over the past two years that is frightening. Two years ago, the Government objected to a programme about Northern Ireland called "Real Lives". Hon. Members will remember the programme. The Government wanted it banned. The BBC resisted and said, "We believe that this is a fair programme and it should go ahead". The Government were forced to intervene. The Home Secretary used his vestigial powers to intervene by a direct approach to the governors to ensure that the film was not put on. Two years ago, in defence of the freedom of broadcasting, the broadcasters resisted the Government's intervention.

Eighteen months later, there was another series of programmes called "Secret Society", including a programme about the Zircon satellite. In the intervening period there had been a series of attacks by the chairman of the Tory party. For two years he maintained a war of attrition against the broadcasters. We remember particularly his ludicrous analysis of the reporting of the Libyan bombing. As a result of that, he created exactly the situation that he had sought to create. Instead of

courageously resisting, the broadcasters were now afraid and applied a piece of self censorship. In 18 months, they had moved from resisting censorship to applying self censorship.

They withdrew that programme but, lo and behold, their action did not even work. The tragedy of self censorship is not that it prevents censorship; it lowers the threshold at which censorship begins. When the broadcasters withdrew, they weakened their position. After the Zircon programme was withdrawn, there followed 18 months of reduction of the threshold of intervention. The special branch invaded the Scottish BBC. That was the way in which the centenary year of bloody Sunday opened. An important legal problem has not yet been settled. The incident took place only half a mile from my home. I would not have believed that such an invasion of the Scottish BBC could have taken place, nor that the special branch could have treated the broadcasters with such contempt. Two years ago they were able to resist attacks from the chairman of the Tory party, but these attacks weakened their resolve to resist. They applied self censorship to try to cope with the situation, but that simply lowered the threshold at which intervention took place. A few months after the Zircon affair something else happened. Ten weeks of preparation was put into the "Spycatcher" programme and it was then pulled out. Resistance was weakened, a programme was withdrawn, and the next time no programme was made.

The record in the press has been one of increasing monopolisation. Events in broadcasting and in the press have come together this year. We can get no assurance about the third threat facing the freedom of the word—value added tax. Some hon. Members might remember the great work of Milton, Areopagitica, in which he attacked state intervention. He did so not in the interests of his own party or of parliamentary revolutionists, but in defence of the reactionaries of the period. He said that they, too, must have their freedom. When printing was developed, both Church and state applied censorship. In 1694, through the work of Milton and others, censorship was removed. It was replaced by a financial censorship, the beginning of stamp duty which lasted for 200 years. In addition to censorship and monopoly, Britain is now being threatened by financial censorship—the imposition of VAT. The Newspaper Society says that, if VAT is imposed, we shall witness the loss of 7,000 jobs, the closure of a dozen dailies and of up to 1,000 weeklies. It would also have a terrible effect on public and academic libraries. Public libraries could obtain repayment for the VAT, but academic libraries could not. They would be clobbered by VAT and by the increased price of books as a result of the reduction in the sale of books. The price of a book would increase considerably, by about 20 per cent. if it followed the 15 per cent. tax. That too is an attack on the freedom of the word.

Many hon. Members raised this issue during the election and we did not get satisfactory replies. The Prime Minister said:

> "If anyone tried to put VAT on children's clothes and shoes, they would never, never get it through the House." —[*Official Report*, 7 July; Vol. 119, c. 192.]

The right hon. Lady doth protest too much. She also said that she had no intention of imposing VAT on food, but, of course, she has already done so.

In 1979, when some of us said that the Government were preparing to double VAT, the then Chancellor said that the Government had no intention of doubling VAT. Fifty days after the election, VAT went up from 8 to 15 per cent., just 1 per cent. short of doubling. So much for Treasury assurances. We are right to be afraid and we are even more right to be afraid that that further element of tax will come about. Although the Prime Minister said that she would never put tax on food—and yet has done so—she has not yet given a commitment that she will not put VAT on books and publications.

On 19 November, the Prime Minister wrote to me as follows:

> "As you know it is customary for the Government to express its intentions on taxation at Budget time—and only then."

I had asked for an assurance that there would be no VAT on books. She continued:

> "In the wholly exceptional circumstances of the General Election campaign, I gave undertakings about a number of specific VAT zero rates."

Many politicians give undertakings in the exceptional circumstances of general elections. The Prime Minister went on:

> "These are firm commitments which the Government stands by. But, that apart, the convention to which I have referred holds good."

The letter continues:

> "I have made the position perfectly clear . . . and I have already given a firm commitment to reject any proposals which would restrict the Government's ability to use zero-rating."

She carefully avoids, however, giving any assurance of the kind that was given in relation to food and to children's clothes and shoes in the "exceptional circumstances" of the general election. Moreover, not one of those commitments remains.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman predicts cataclysmic effects if the tax were introduced. As it already exists in the Common Market, can he produce evidence to show that the press there is less vigorous than ours or its standards of erudition lower?

Mr. Buchan: On the contrary, there is probably now no worse popular press than that in Britain. That was not my point. Other countries have far more generous laws protecting small journalists. For example, in France there are provisions for distribution, which is the fifth means of censorship in this country. The hon. Gentleman's comment is therefore irrelevant. I have referred to the analysis of the situation made by the Newspaper Society and by the Library Association. Moreover, Lord Stockton reached exactly the same conclusions as I have about the dangers. Short of referring to Churchill, I could scarcely call in aid a more notable ally from the Tory party than Macmillan.

In addition to the triple monopoly of the popular press and the threats to publication, distribution is run not by a triumvirate but by a double act—John Menzies and W. H. Smith. I began by referring to *Tribune*. I am the unpaid chairman—in fact it costs me money—of a small journal, which is the one publication that expresses something of the broad Left position in this country. The problem is that retailers will not begin ensuring numbers of papers until sales have built up, so it is very difficult for a small journal to break through. This applies as much to other small journals as to Left-wing political publications.

In France, those who own and organise distribution outlets must take and display all publications requested. There is an element of cost, which I am quite prepared to accept, but all distributors then have to carry the

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publication. That would be a step forward in this country to loosen the tight squeeze preventing dissemination of many publications.

The saving grace of this country is that we probably have the best, most open, diverse and high quality programmes of any broadcasting organisation. The freedom of the word has been carried through radio both to this country and abroad. Like the Peacock report on television, the Green Paper on radio contains the same threat—privatisation. Two frequencies are to be taken from public broadcasting by commercial broadcasting, without the requirement for diversity and information. The Green Paper states that commercial radio wil be "more lightly regulated." In other words, the basic formula for broadcasting in this country — the requirement to inform, educate and entertain—will not apply. The BBC, which has such a regulation imposed, will then have to compete.

We had hoped for a development of community radio so that the voices of groups and areas could be heard, but that is also to become commercial. This year we have seen direct censorship, the threat of financial censorship and the censorship resulting from the narrow monopoly of control. The glory of the word in Britain—radio—is now also under threat. It has been a terrible year in which to celebrate the centenary of bloody Sunday. We must fight against this. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith has described a number of ways in which this might be done. People such as those described by the hon. Member for Thanet, South should have the right to reply. Those of us who have been involved in defending individuals know how difficult that is to ensure. The right to reply must be imposed by law. We also need the right to prevent over-monopoly in relation to the *Financial Times*. The Government should say that enough is enough and that there must be no increase in ownership of press titles beyond a certain percentage. This could be done by limits on shareholdings, numbers of titles, and so on, but it must be done.

We need a media enterprise board to help launch new ventures. In Sweden, new journals are assisted by sharing newsprint and subsidising its use. Why should we not do the same? It is part of information and education. We also need an ombudsman to decide whether there should be a right to reply because poor people cannot risk ruin by taking legal action. That is the way forward.

It would be remiss of me not to mention one further aspect. We have a mish-mash of Government control and responsibility in relation to broadcasting. It is extraordinary that the same Ministry—the Home Office—which is in charge of censorship is also charged with ensuring freedom of the press. The very Department that is in charge of the special branch is supposed to be protecting the broadcasting organisation that was invaded by special branch. I make no bones about this. I fought for a long time to establish a Ministry for the arts and media to look after communications, the press, radio and television. I lost that battle—that is one reason why I speak from the Opposition Back Benches—but that battle is well worth fighting and it is a major element in the fight to restore freedom of the press to its proper place in this country.

11.48 am

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): There was a time when the Bible was regarded as subversive literature and banned. There is still a time when the Bible is regarded as subversive literature and banned. Books are still burnt, newpaper editors threatened and newspaper offices destroyed. Dictators throughout the world, from Chile to the Soviet Union, stand the freedom of the press on its head. They use it to put about their own propaganda and disinformation. They have the freedom of the press, but their people do not.

We politicians, too, recognise the power of the press. In particular, we pay attention to our own local papers. When I was elected earlier this year, I commissioned a profile of my constituency. To my amazement, I found that there were 16 local papers. I cannot rush around trying to keep up with them all to feed them information about what I am doing. I hope that they report me fairly, and give me a reasonable amount of coverage. I also hope for accuracy. I remember that when, a few years ago, I fought a constituency in the east end of London, the press published a photograph of me with my bicycle beside the caption, "A pony enjoys a winter frolic." That sort of inaccuracy is, of course, forgivable. What is unforgivable is when one's words are taken, twisted and distorted, and used for other purposes. Even when we are in this House, we know perfectly well that the press is always waiting for us outside. It may be suspended, but that does not matter; the cameramen and reporters are waiting for us there.

It is up to us to use the press as responsibly as we can, and to hope for responsible treatment from it in return. Of course, there are difficulties, and I agree entirely with the part of the motion that refers to the

"falling standard of honesty and integrity of some newspapers".

Hon. Members on both sides are rightly critical of the appalling standards of journalism in too many of the tabloids. There has been harassment of the royal family, and a preoccupation with boobs and bonks that one would imagine was particularly inappropriate today because of the spread of AIDS. Surely we should be looking to those newspapers to give a responsible lead to the public, instead of leading them downwards.

The Press Council has been referred to as "that toothless pekinese". It is true that it has little power and that newspapers can ignore its rulings. But the way forward is not to impose legislation on the press. That would be a dangerous path. If the press operates by permission of the Government and its rules are enshrined in legislation, it is all too easy for Governments of any political colour to change the rules and say that the press cannot do things in such and such way in future, because the Government think it is wrong. That would be a retrograde step.

There must be more self-regulation in the press. I want the Press Council to be run more by the members of the journalists' profession, possibly on the same lines as the professional body to which I belong — the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors — whose general council has its own rules, disciplines its members and will expel them if need be.

If journalists do not put their own house in order, the Government may well step in—I should be reluctant to see that happen—and do it for them. That would be a dangerous step and could be the first towards subversion of liberty.

11.53 am

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on introducing the debate and giving the House the opportunity to discuss this subject. It has been a very interesting debate so far.

It is a cliché to say that we have a free press in this country. I suppose we do in the sense that anyone has the legal right to start a newspaper if he is minded to do so. That is rather like saying that everyone is free to dine at the Ritz. The freedom of the press is a freedom for millionaires. I hold it to be self-evident that the rights to know and to express oneself are basic to democracy. Everyone should have the right to information, news and opinion, and the right of access to the printed word and the air waves, as long as those media are not used to incite violence, racial hatred or sexual discrimination. We cannot be free to make up our own minds or make informed choices if we do not have a free flow of information and the right to demand accurate answers from those in positions of responsibility and power.

In an age of mass communication, the power to control information is the power to enslave. No reasonable person could be other than concerned and alarmed that nearly all our communications systems are not considered a public service but are owned and controlled by a few wealthy individuals, multinational media conglomerates and unaccountable public corporations. That is especially blatant in the press. Four companies dominate national newspaper circulation in Britain — Murdoch's News International, Maxwell's Mirror Group, Lord Stevens' Express Group and Viscount Rothermere's Associated Press.

Local newspapers show a similar pattern of concentration of ownership. No new provincial morning newspaper has been launched to compete with another local daily since the first world war.

Mr. Corbett: May I put in a plug for the *Birmingham Daily News*, which is published four mornings a week in the city of Birmingham. It is a free sheet and it is in direct competition with *The Birmingham Post*, which is paid for.

Mr. Leighton: I am delighted to hear that. However, as far as I know, no paid-for morning provincial daily newspaper has opened since the first world war. There has certainly been a growth of free sheets, and I am pleased to hear of any diversity. Unfortunately, many of them have shaky finances and do not last long. I hope that the Birmingham one will.

No new evening newspaper has been started in competition with another in Britain—to my knowledge —since the 1930s. That is so even in London, where there was an attempt to open another evening newspaper, which failed. Generally it is true that the number of newspapers in Britain has been declining for 50 years. Equally worrying is the fact that cross-ownership means that these companies are also major providers of other forms of mass communications too, such as television, radio and films.

The Government seem to have no objection—I shall listen to what the Minister has to say about this—to so many media outlets being in the hands of their rich and powerful supporters and being run as means of amassing huge private fortunes. The Government are a monopolist's dream. They have done nothing to stem the lurch to monopoly, nor do they object to the way in which standards of journalism have been depressed and debased by the proprietors. Indeed, the Government spend their time on other concerns, such as attacking press freedom on their own account—banning the Zircon programme, raiding the *New Statesman's* offices, and breaking down the doors of the BBC in Scotland in the process—with their absurd, systematic attempts to gag the press and stop it printing allegations from "Spycatcher". They have used the Contempt of Court Act 1981 to try to suppress the reporting of High Court hearings in the "Spycatcher" case, and have used the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to gain access to photographs taken by journalists. That was done recently at Bristol and is being done now at Wapping.

The editor of the *Mail on Sunday*, Stewart Steven, explained:

> "When a reporter or photographer goes out for his newspaper, he goes on behalf of the editor and the readers and on behalf of no other agency. The moment it is thought by the community at large that he is answering to another body his position becomes totally hopeless and dangerous.
>
> It is an important principle that, in this country, newspapers are not state agencies and the public should know it."

Other editors have said the same thing. How else can all this be described except as an authoritarian Government intimidating journalists and using the courts to control the flow of information? It seems clear that nothing will be done by this Government, voluntarily, to foster diversity.

We all saw the alacrity with which the Government allowed Murdoch to gobble up *Today*. Now we see Murdoch buying into the *Financial Times*. We admire the erudite circumlocutions of the Minister when he "addresses the Fair Trading Act 1973", but, in common with the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), I hope that we will get away from such nuances. The Minister should say clearly in the House that if Murdoch tries to take over the *Financial Times*, it will be intolerable and unacceptable. I am happy to pay a compliment to the *Financial Times*. It is a splendid, objective newspaper. It would be a scandal if that newspaper were taken over and added to the empire of Rupert Murdoch.

It is clear that diversity will not result from market forces. It is the high cost of publishing, distributing and promoting newspapers that is the major reason why the ownership of the media remains with an elite. If society wants press diversity, it must see that those facilities are available to all as a public service. It is not as though there is no readership for other newspapers. It is the economics of current publishing practice that destroys them. For example, when the *Daily Herald* folded in 1964, it had a circulation five times that of *The Times*. When the *News Chronicle* closed in 1960, it had a circulation five times that of *The Guardian*. Indeed, the combined readership of the *Daily Herald*, the *News Chronicle* and *Reynolds News*—all referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith—was 9·3 million, yet they all closed. It was the shortage not of readers that brought about the collapse of those papers, but of advertising revenue. That is the decisive factor.

At the moment, unless so-called newspapers go for sex, violence and soap stories to obtain mass circulation, or appeal to middle-class values to get a middle class readership, they will not obtain sufficient advertising. That is not a recipe for press diversity. If we want that diversity,

[Mr. Leighton]

and if we want to encourage a free flow of information, we must make facilities available to all who can provide the readership. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith suggested a number of ways in which that could be done.

If we are to have consumer choice we must go further. We must break up the existing media monopolies. The market share of any one owner should be limited. A number of hon. Members have hinted that they are thinking along similar lines. Cross-ownership should be outlawed. The private ownership of newspapers, radio, television, films and cable should be kept separate. That is done in some other countries.

Another priority that has been raised by a number of hon. Members is that we should have a legal, enforceable, statutory right of reply. We all know of people who have been traduced in the press, and examples have been given today. I wish to reiterate the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith. Before the election, there was a dirty tricks department that circulated fabrications to certain newspapers, which were only too anxious to receive them. Those fabrications concerned Labour councils.

Once the fabrications and lies were printed, they went into general circulation and were quoted many times by many others. I shall give a couple of examples. There was a report in the *Mail on Sunday* headed, "Race Spies Shock". That article said:

"Race commissars in a Left-wing borough are recruiting 180 Thought Police to patrol schools for prejudice. And they will be paid out of a £5 million Government grant intended to promote racial harmony."

That article was written by Peter Dobbie and Peter Day. The truth of the matter was that a decision to employ race relations advisers at Brent schools had been agreed by all the political parties of the council, which was then Conservative controlled. The council took the decision to comply with the Home Office directive.

The *Daily Express* picked up one such story, and the headline ran:

"Loony Left in Wendy House Row.

Toy 'is sexist'".

The article said:

"The Loony Lefties have struck again—this time at that children's playtime favourite, the Wendy House. Labour-controlled Ealing Council in West London reckons this top toy should now be referred to in schools as the 'homes corner'."

That matter was never even discussed by Ealing council.

The *Daily Mail* ran a story with the headline:

"Rhyme without reason . . . Now Loony Left rewrites children's nursery favourite 'Ba Ba green sheep'".

The article said:

"Ba, Ba black sheep — one of the oldest children's nursery rhymes—has been banned by a Left-wing council as 'racist'. Playgroup leaders have been told that in future children should sing 'green' sheep instead."

That is sheer invention. That matter was never discussed.

Another report in the *Daily Mail*—there are so many that perhaps I should make this the last one—said:

"Staff have to ask for coffee without milk? Not black! Left-wing fanaticism has already meant that councillors and staff have to talk about coffee without milk instead of black coffee."

Pure fabrication. Originally, that was printed in the *Daily Mail*.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): That case might be fabrication. However, one could believe that to be true, especially when one hears that an hon. Member of this House has already told a member of the catering staff, having been asked if he wanted his coffee black or white, "You should not say that. You should say with or without milk."

Mr. Leighton: I do not know who that hon. Member is. I have heard some people say that they like their coffee grey and there are a lot of grey Members on the Conservative Benches at the moment.

The stories that I have quoted state that Labour councils have taken such decisions and have instructed their staffs to do certain things. Those stories were lies. Let us not beat about the bush. Those lies were put out deliberately by a dirty tricks department and, having once been printed, they have been reprinted umpteen times and quoted by everyone. All that happened just before an election. I believe that this is disgraceful and appalling. I do not believe that we should conduct our public affairs in that way.

Mr. Soley: I am not so much concerned about the anti-Labour bit. There has always been an anti-Labour press and we can win or lose elections without that being relevant. What troubles me so deeply—I suspect it is the same for my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton)—are the examples that he and I have cited. Basically we are concerned about scapegoating minority groups, especially black people and others with different sexual identities from the norm. That scapegoating of minority groups is profoundly dangerous for a democracy, especially if the press begins to whip up a hatred that already exists.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Let me give another example from the *Daily Mail*. The article described

"a bizarre policy in Lambeth which would let homosexuals jump the housing queue."

Gay people do not receive special treatment when housing is allocated. That is another lie. Black people, gays and minorities are scapegoated, and the assumption is made that loony Left councils have made those decisions. Let us criticise them for actual decisions that they make, but let us not fabricate lies. It is appalling to scapegoat groups and individuals, such as the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). Not everybody is like Jeffrey Archer and able to obtain redress. We have to consider, even if reluctantly, the necessity to legislate for an enforceable right of reply. It could be administered by an ombudsman, an independent person, or a commissioner who would be able to respond quickly to complaints about lies, errors or gross bias, and who would have the power to impose sanctions. There is a crying need for that, and that has been mentioned already by many hon. Members. I look forward to the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) is to introduce.

Before discussing new technology, I declare my interest as a member of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, the largest printing union. People thought that new technology would radically change the newspaper industry for the better because it would lower costs, thereby making it easier for anyone to start a newspaper, and that it would lead to diversity. We were also told that it would lead to Left-wing newspapers. I do not oppose

technology. We must all embrace new technology. However, I did not believe that it would lead to diversity or the introduction of Left-wing newspapers. New technology commenced in the United States and no new Left-wing newspapers were introduced there. If I am wrong, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who is smiling, will perhaps tell me. The argument was that new technology would reduce labour costs. Thousands of workers were sacked in Fleet street but, according to the Royal Commission, labour makes up less than 21 per cent. of a newspaper's costs. New technology has no effect on the other costs, including major costs such as newsprint. Converting to new technology was so expensive that it destroyed the previous owners of *The Daily Telegraph*, who had to sell out to a Canadian. New technology is not extremely cheap and it does not solve problems.

The test for new technology was when Eddie Shah came on the scene with *Today*. There was a lot of bragging and hullabaloo that he was going to run rings round all the big boys and break down the monopoly. Even his "cheap" new technology launch of *Today* cost £22 million, which is not an insignificant sum. Since then, many tens of millions of pounds have been put into *Today* by a variety of people, but to what end? It has had several editors, it has had three owners and has been swallowed by the arch monopolist Rupert Murdoch, so new technology did not bring diversity. New technology is not the solution because, if the slight reduction in labour costs is applied to all newspapers, it will not improve the relative position of weaker publications or alter the relative position of competing titles.

Freedom of the press is being diminished and eroded and all of us are beginning to recognise that we need to reverse that trend. We have had a first-class debate today on the subject introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith and I am certain that the House will be obliged to return to it again and again until we get it right. In fact, we may have to return to it quickly if there is any threat to the *Financial Times*.

12.14 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): We all agree that we frequently see reports with which we are familiar in the press, but we have difficulty recognising the event that we experienced. We know that many reports in the press are anecdotal, selective, distorted and misleading. Nearly all hon. Members can recount instances when they have been grossly misreported or dealt with unfairly by the press. I can relate a recent personal example. It involved the much-vaunted *Independent*. The paper referred to Members' interests and the way in which Members are influenced by professional lobbyists and it referred to the British Airways lobby. *The Independent* examined the Register of Members' Interests and learnt which hon. Members had declared that they had been given a free flight by British Airways.

My name was among those included on the list. The implication was that anyone on that list regularly received free flights from British Airways and was therefore guaranteed to support BA in any lobbying that it made in the House. That was an appalling inference. *The Independent* failed to report or even consider the fact that I had flown once to New York as part of a delegation in my capacity as vice-chairman of the Back-Bench Tourism Committee. The committee flew to New York after the Libyan bombing to give evidence to Congress to show that this country was not besieged by terrorists and was safe for tourists to visit. We witnessed and publicised the opening of the new British Airways terminal in New York.

I do not apologise for the fact that British Airways gave us a free flight. We helped British Airways and British tourism. However, my flight was not reported in that context. The report implied that all those who had accepted the free flight are now the bought men of British Airways. We all find that kind of reporting extremely regrettable.

Nevertheless, I have described an anecdote. It is not the full story. Sadly, much of what we have heard from Opposition Members has also been anecdotal. It is unrepresentative of what happens in the press as a whole. I also fear that many of the allegations that the press is becoming more monopolistic and held in the hands of fewer people are far from the truth. I have researched this subject in the estimable House of Commons Library and from a publication entitled "Benn's Media Information Service". I do not know whether that publication has any connection with any hon. or right hon. Member. It is highly objective, precise and factual. Whether those are characteristics which might be redolent of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is for other hon. Members to decide.

I gained some interesting information from that publication. There are far more newspaper groups in this country than those owned by Murdoch, Maxwell and Stevens. It might be helpful if I describe all the groups. First, there is News Internatinal owned by Mr. Murdoch. It includes *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun*, the *News of the World* and *Today*. Secondly, there is Mr. Black's *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*. Thirdly, there is Mr. Maxwell's *Daily Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, the late lamented *London Daily News*, the *Sunday People*, the *Daily Record* in Scotland and the Scottish *Sunday Mail*. The fourth group is the Guardian group including the *Manchester Evening News* and other provincial newspapers. Fifthly, Pearsons own the *Financial Times* and many local papers under the auspices of the Westminster Press. The sixth group is Associated Newspapers, owned by Lord Rothermere. It includes the *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, the *Evening Standard* and the provincial press. The seventh group is that owned by Lord Stevens. The United Newspaper group owns the *Daily Express*, *The Star*, the *Sunday Express* and other provincial papers. The eighth newly formed group owns *The Independent*. No one has mentioned the *Morning Star* yet. That is owned by a co-operative, but sadly it appears at odds with some of its former supporters. There is the *News on Sunday*, which sadly died only a few days ago, and last, but by no means least, there is Mr. Tiny Rowland's Observer group with its provincial and foreign newspapers.

Mr. Leighton: Has not the hon. Gentleman just given facts that show that four groups own the overwhelming majority of the circulation? Three groups have 80 per cent. of the mass circulation, the tabloids. I am pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman is doing research. He has only to look at the reports of the Royal Commission on the press which give tables showing that over the past 50 years the number of titles has been diminishing all the time to understand the anxiety about that process. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that over 50 years the number of titles has diminished.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman may be right that over 50 years the number of titles has decreased, but I am not sure. If he will listen to me, I shall give him some statistics that I hope he will find interesting and helpful.

In the past 10 years six new national newspapers have sprung up. There was *The Independent* in 1986, *The Star* in 1978, *Today* in 1986, *The Mail on Sunday* in 1982, *News on Sunday* in 1987, and the late-lamented *London Daily News* in 1986. If we go back a little further, there is *The Sun* which started in 1964. Admittedly we have lost a few titles but we have gained some influential ones.

According to Benn's, there were 10 daily newspapers in 1980 and there are 12 daily newspapers today. There were seven national Sunday newspapers in 1980 but there are nine today. Therefore, in both of those groups there has been an increase of two newspapers.

Much has been said about the provincial press. I shall give the figures for weeklies, including some fortnightlies. In 1980 there were 1,494 weekly newspapers. The present figure is 1,748. Again we can see that there has been an increase in the past few years in the number of newspapers available to the public.

Since 1980 there has been no change in Associated Newspapers. The Express group consists of the same newspapers but the proprietor has changed from Lord Matthews to Lord Stevens. There has been no change in the Guardian group. Only the ownership has changed in the Mirror group from Reed to Maxwell. In the Observer group the ownership is the only thing to have changed in the past 10 years, from Thomas Bradshaw to Tiny Rowland. Only in News International has there been a significant change. There has been no change in proprietor; that is still Rupert Murdoch. However, to his original titles of *News of the World* and *The Sun* he has added *The Times, Sunday Times* and *Today*.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) sought to imply that if we were to look at the circulation all would be different. The facts do not bear him out. The two most powerful groups are owned by Maxwell and Murdoch. According to the figures from the Library, Maxwell has 21·1 per cent. of the circulation of daily newspapers, and Murdoch has 32·4 per cent., making an aggregate of 53·5 per cent. for those two large groups. In 1976, when the Labour party was in office, the two largest groups were the Mirror group with 27·5 per cent. of daily circulation and News International with 26·5 per cent. Thus the two largest groups between them had a 54 per cent. share—rather more than now.

The position is even worse in the case of the Sunday newspapers. In 1976 the Mirror Group owned 41·8 per cent. of Sunday circulation, and the largest group today, which is Murdoch's, owns only 35·3 per cent. The power of the press barons has actually diminished since 1976. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East shakes his head. I shall give him all the figures if he would like them. They are the Library's figures.

United Newspapers currently owns 20·5 per cent. of dailies and 12·7 per cent. of Sundays; Associated Newspapers owns 11·7 per cent. of dailies and 9·4 per cent. of Sundays; Maxwell owns 21·1 per cent. of dailies and 34·1 per cent. of Sundays; Murdoch owns 32·4 per cent. of dailies and 35·3 per cent. of Sundays; Lonrho owns no dailies, but 4·4 per cent. of Sundays; the Daily Telegraph plc owns 7·7 per cent. of dailies and 4·1 per cent. of Sundays; Pearson plc owns only 1·3 per cent. of dailies —not 2 per cent., as was said earlier; Guardian Newspapers Ltd. owns 3·4 per cent. of dailies, and the owners of *The Independent* 2 per cent.

Ownership is now very diverse: no one person controls the whole market. An entirely different position obtained in 1976. Then, Beaverbrook owned 18·5 per cent. of dailies and 17·6 per cent. of Sundays; Associated Newspapers owned 12·5 per cent. of dailies; the Mirror Group owned 27·5 per cent. of dailies and 41·8 per cent. of Sundays; News International owned 26·5 per cent. of dailies and 26·2 per cent. of Sundays; Thomsons owned 2·2 per cent. of dailies and 7·1 per cent. of Sundays; Pearsons owned 1·2 per cent. of dailies; Observer Ltd. owned 3·4 per cent. of Sundays; the Daily Telegraph plc owned 9·3 per cent. of dailies and 3·9 per cent. of Sundays; and Guardian Newspapers Ltd. owned 2·2 per cent. of dailies.

I am sorry to have bored hon. Members with that catalogue of statistics. It is important, however, that such matters are put on record. Opposition Members have claimed that monopolistic proprietors increasingly control the press. My statistics, and any independent review of the market, show that assertion to be completely untrue. What is true is that there has been a significant reduction in the sections of the press that support the policy of the Labour party, which is hardly surprising in view of its current policies.

Few people find it easy to support such policies. That is the burden of the Opposition's complaint, but they cannot really complain if fewer and fewer members of the press support them, when it is clear that fewer and fewer members of the general public do so. The only remedy for the Labour party is for it to put its house in order, and revert to policies that all of us—including members of the press — would feel more able to support. Then, perhaps, we should not have the silly debates that we hear today.

12.28 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Let me begin by saying that in the Register of Members' Interests I have declared non-executive directorships of a newspaper publishing company and a local radio station.

I believe that the motion is flawed, because its mover and subsequent Opposition speakers have revealed their true inclinations by making a number of suggestions that are traditionally associated with the Left wing. It is argued that newspapers should be subsidised and that Left-wing councils should be defended, even though many Opposition Members do not support the defence of such councils, with their extremist views.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: In a minute.

It is argued that there should be a media enterprise board, and there have been complaints about the treatment of minorities by the press. Minority groups are put in a position in which Opposition Members can say that they are being used as scapegoats because certain people have sought to promote those minorities to the detriment of the majorities in the areas in which those groups reside.

Mr. Soley: I should not like the hon. Gentleman to make a bad start to his speech, but he is missing the point of the argument. The argument is not about the Labour party or Left-wing councils being attacked, or about

scapegoats. It is about the lies and the distortion in the press, which I believe the hon. Gentleman accepts is so. Many of his hon. Friends certainly accept it. If there is strong evidence of lies and distortion that whip up an already existing hatred for minority groups, does not the hon. Gentleman think that that is dangerous?

Mr. Shaw: I do not think that there is one person in this country, with the exception of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who does not make mistakes in his or her daily job. Mistakes are made by journalists, accountants, lawyers and other professional people, but there are people who lie when they talk to journalists.

I have received a number of complaints about the disaster that has affected many of my constituents. Complaints have been made about many ships sailing with their bow doors open. Yesterday somebody claimed that a lorry driver had been on four ships that had sailed with their bow doors open. Since the disaster there has been no substantiated evidence that ships have sailed with their bow doors open.

There was a public meeting to which families who were involved in the disaster were invited. At that meeting a lorry driver decided to make a name for himself, with the result that I received a number of telephone calls from journalists, who asked whether he had spoken the truth. Lies begin because human beings, who have no hope of promoting themselves in the media or of getting publicity, seize on an opportunity to prey on other people's misery. That is not what society wants, and that is not what the press should be concerned with, either.

This debate is about the freedom of the press. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) said that this debate was in danger of becoming a debate that is biased against success. That, too, can be associated with Opposition Members. The successful newspapers of the last few years have been those of News International. *The Independent* — a new newspaper — survives. The *Today* newspaper has failed temporarily, but perhaps it will have a new lease of life. The other new newspaper, the *News on Sunday*, failed dismally, despite the backing of the trade union movement—a movement that in theory ought to be able to guarantee a circulation of 8 million. However, the true circulation of the *News on Sunday* was 112,000, because no trade union general secretary was prepared to back it and to force it on the 8 million members of the trade union movement. He knew that the vast majority of the 8 million would not be interested in reading the *News on Sunday*.

Why do newspaper circulations increase or decrease? My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West came close to the answer when he referred to public sentiment and the way in which the public approach newspapers. There has been a major change in public mood. A newspaper's success depends on its ability to capture the public mood.

In the past 20 years there has been a change in mood towards positivism. In the 1960s and the 1970s it was traditional to knock Britain, and that continued into the winter of discontent of 1979, which we all remember so well. With that came a big change in attitude because people were heartily fed up with negativism. They looked for something new and positive. They were looking for Britain to become great again in the eyes of the world. That has certainly happened under this Government. Even members of the royal family drew attention to it. The Duke of Edinburgh was one of the first to point out that there was far too much knocking in the press. The press has responded to the demands of public mood and to the fact that the Government have brought about a change in attitudes. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may certainly intervene, but if they shout from a sedentary position I cannot hear them.

The desire of the nation for success and personal achievement has been reflected in recent opinion polls among the young, which show that they want opportunities to succeed and that they want those opportunities reflected in the newspapers. They want newspapers to talk about the opportunities available to them in business, pleasure, leisure and all the other matters that interest them. Rather than being able to change public mood, newspapers are changed by it. We now have a positive press that responds positively to what people want to read.

It is humbug to refer, as Opposition Members have done, to the difficulties of entering the market. It has already been pointed out that many new newspapers are starting up in this country. In addition to those new newspapers, a whole new section of the newspaper industry has grown up. It is the free newspaper industry, and the company of which I am a director is part of it. That industry earns more than £150 million a year of revenue and has created about 10,000 jobs in the past 15 years. The free newspaper industry does not only compete with or put other newspapers out of work; in many areas it complements the newspapers that are paid for. In my area the two operate side by side in a positive fashion trying to compete for stories. Sometimes the stories are wrong. I myself was not happy during the election campaign when a story appeared about me that had not been checked. Unfortunately, the source of that story was a Labour Member whom I shall not, of course, accuse of lying in the House. However, I suggest that the story given to the press was not wholly true. That is how stories become distorted. Journalists sometimes take stories from sources that are less than reliable, although the vast majority of journalists endeavour to be professional in their work.

I draw attention to the claim made earlier about the cost of entry into the newspaper market. It was said to be enormous. The group of which I became a non-executive director last year was founded 15 years ago on £500. That is not a great sum and, allowing for inflation, the equivalent would be only £5,000. I suggest that a group of five or six Labour Members club together, especially in view of the modest salary increase on 1 January, and guarantee £5,000 to start a solid Left-wing newspaper. Their only problem would be that few people would read it. That was the problem for *News on Sunday*. There is no difficulty in entering the market.

We have been asked, "Why are there no Left-wing newspapers in the United States?" Virtually no one there is interested in reading and listening to Left-wing views. The United States has moved on from Left-wing expression. The Communist party is virtually non-existent and the debate is between the Democrat and Republican parties, neither of which has extreme Left-wing views.

Many Conservative Members are filled with genuine tears because of the way in which the Labour party is destroying itself with its policies. We wish that there were a proper Opposition. The reason why there is not a group of newspapers which supports the Opposition's case is that

[Mr. Shaw]

the Opposition are so far adrift from the public mood. I make the Opposition an offer: if they have any difficulty in getting their newspapers printed, I shall endeavour to do everything I can to get them printed, provided they are prepared to pay the commercial rate. I am sure that we can offer the Opposition a good commercial rate with a reasonable discount for quantity, if they can find a sufficient number of people to read the newspapers.

Although it is easy to enter the newspaper market, it is not so easy to find the readership, as *News on Sunday* found to its cost. But even *News on Sunday* was distributed widely. During the summer I saw *News on Sunday* on sale in the newsagents in Gibraltar, copy after copy piled on high. No one wanted to read it, even in Gibraltar.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman says that he is the director of one of the free news sheets and talks about readers not wanting to read certain newspapers. Will he give me some advice? What do I as a consumer have to do to stop people from putting some of these dreadful things through my letter box? These pieces of paper are uninvited and unsolicited and paid for by advertising. What should I do to stop these awful products that the publishers insist on thrusting down the throats of unsuspecting consumers like me? What does one have to do to let this cup pass from us? What does one have to do to remain free of the junk pieces of paper that are put into one's letter box? May we have a respite?

Mr. Shaw: Normally, I try to charge expensively for my advice, but this time I shall make an exception and give the hon. Gentleman some free advice. Any responsible free newspaper group is a member of the Association of Free Newspapers. I believe that if an hon. Member receives a letter from a resident who says that he does not want the free newspaper delivered it will not be delivered. While I was canvassing in my constituency, I saw that a number of people had put little notices in their windows or by their letter boxes saying that they did not want those articles delivered. Old-age pensioners are sometimes worried in case newspapers will be left in their letter boxes while they are away. The free newspaper company will not normally deliver if so requested. Distribution is closely controlled and managed by area managers who specifically react to individual concerns that are expressed by residents.

Mr. Renton: May I add to the excellent and free advice that my hon. Friend has given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton)? If the hon. Gentleman is seriously bothered by the issue which he has described—I know that many are—he may care to write to the data protection registrar, who will be able to give him and any of his constituents further advice to supplement that which has already been given to him by my hon. Friend on how the flow of irritating and unwished for bumph that comes through the letter box can be stopped.

Mr. Shaw: There has been a considerable change in the newspaper market in recent years. There may be a concentration of newspaper proprietors and ownership at any particular time, but that concentration changes over the years as all businesses change. Many newspapers have changed ownership in the past 10 years. It is interesting that in some areas there have been management buy-outs of small local newspaper groups where the management felt that it could provide a better service to the community than that provided by a large national company.

References have been made to the Government's position on the *Today* newspaper. I spent many years training to be an accountant and I know as an accountant that when a company gets into difficulties it is necessary that action is taken immediately. If a business or company is to be saved, one cannot hang around for months or years on end while the company is bleeding. Nowhere is this more true than in the newspaper industry. If advertisers see that a newspaper is failing, they will withdraw support immediately. When that happens, the demise of a newspaper can be extremely rapid. *Today* was faced with that position. It had a considerable financial deficit and was bleeding finance daily. In my view, the Government took the right decision. Indeed, it was impossible to come to any other decision.

If Labour Members are complaining about the decision, they should ask themselves where they and their supporters were at the time. If Mr. Maxwell had really wanted *Today*, he could have upped his offer by a few million. If he had £50 million to underwrite the Channel tunnel, why did he not have £50 million to pay for *Today*? The answer is that he felt that *Today* was not financially viable at that price for himself. Therefore, the market decided in the end. *Today* is now showing all the signs of recovery. As News International has managed to succeed with all its other newspapers, it appears that it is about to succeed with *Today*.

Although it is not strictly relevant to the motion, reference has been made to broadcasting and local radio. It has been suggested that commercial local radio does not take a responsive view to the community and that it deals solely in trivia and music. That is not true. The reality is that in opinion poll after poll, and in listenership statistics, it has been discovered by the station in which I am involved and in local radio generally in this country and in others that there is an overriding demand for music to be played on local radio. It suits the medium of local radio. It should not be thought, however, that local radio does not broadcast news. No one should believe that local radio, including local commercial radio, does not feel that it has an important role to play in the community.

The radio station in which I have been involved has recently had to deal with the terrible problems that resulted from the snow, which overcame many transport facilities and blocked many of the roads in Kent earlier this year. My local radio station also had to deal with the recent storms and gales. We set up special snow lines so that people could phone in and so that we could get emergency help to them.

During the gales and storms we set up special lines and helped many old-age pensioners who were suffering at home through lack of electricity. We helped them to know what was being done for them. We encouraged people to look for others who were suffering through lack of electricity in their villages. We tried to make sure that people were aware that help was on its way and of how long it would take to reach them.

A local radio station may feel that it can gain an audience by broadcasting music, but no such station can afford to go on the air without those services. In the morning, if people do not hear about train delays and traffic problems, and if there are not the news bulletins that people want to hear, one does not get an audience and

it goes elsewhere. We in Kent enjoy the station that I have the privilege to be involved in. BBC Radio Kent also offers a good facility.

In television, we have a problem at present—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the press?"] Broadcasting and the freedom of broadcasting were mentioned by Opposition Members and I feel that someone must reply. Therefore, I shall make a brief comment. Television is suffering from what the newspaper industry suffered from some years ago, and still suffers from to a minor extent in some areas. That problem is overmanning. We cannot continue with overmanning and the lack of freedom that it brings about because it prevents a broad selection of programmes. In television, it has inhibited independent producers from starting.

We need to see more freedom in television broadcasting. There should be more programmes from the independent sector. There should be more opportunity for a broader range of programmes, which could come about by having fewer people working on individual programmes. Then more programmes could be produced by the many members of the industry. Employment in the television industry would increase, as it has in some areas of the newspaper industry, if we got rid of the restrictive practices in television.

The industry of broadcasting and the press is determined by the public—not just by the public mood, but by the public purse. One can have a choice in any newsagent. All that is required is a decision on which newspaper proprietor will get the 20p or 30p. People have that opportunity today. The only complaint of Opposition Members can be that the newspapers do not reflect their views because they do not reflect the views of the country at large.

12.52 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I pay tribute to my local newspaper, the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, for more than just the obvious reason. It showed the more acceptable face of British journalism when earlier this year it launched an appeal to raise £500,000 for a body scanner for the local hospital. I am pleased to say that it managed to raise the money within seven months. That was a tremendous achievement, so I happily pay tribute to the newspaper as well as to all those in the vicinity of Huddersfield and in my constituency of Colne Valley who so generously contributed towards that appeal. I am sure that the local community will benefit very much from the body scanner.

This has been a fascinating and interesting debate. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), that he is complaining not about the bias against the Labour party in the press today, but more about the danger of monopoly in the British press. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) did an absolutely superb demolition job on that argument. He proved that there is no more a monopoly in the British press today than there was 10 years ago.

Behind the Opposition's argument lies a belief that the British press is somehow hostile to their cause. They will not deny that. I have heard many people of the Left voice that complaint and it needs to be addressed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) pointed out, one has only to go to the Tea Room to see the multitude of newspapers available. My problem is always which to pick up first. There is *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the *Financial Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*. There is also the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun*. Even the *Morning Star* is kept in the Tea Room.

It is interesting to note that 1,748 weekly newspapers are published in this country. The Opposition may complain that their views are not put across in some of the daily newspapers, but there are many organs available which propagate Left-wing Labour policies. Three years ago an inquiry into the Left-wing press in this country found 69 newspapers, periodicals and journals tending to put forward Left-wing political views. That is quite a choice. Three years later, there may not be quite so many, but there are still a great many. The Opposition cannot deny that.

Conservative Members should therefore challenge the myth that the popular daily press is overwhelmingly Right-wing and hostile to the Labour party. Certainly, the editorials of a number of papers are Right-wing in nature and support the Conservative party, but many Conservatives know from experience that the Right-wing press will not protect them if they stray into the realms of misbehaviour. The popular press certainly enjoyed itself when the Federation of Conservative Students seemed to be misbehaving at a conference. Moreover, when the Liberal-SDP alliance got off the ground the daily press seemed to be having such a love affair with the alliance that some of us were concerned that the Liberal party and the SDP were receiving far too much favourable coverage.

Even the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has good cause to thank the popular press. After the 1983 election Sarah Benton, deputy editor of the *New Statesman*, argued convincingly that CND's cause had been enormously helped by the media in the job of proving that there was a choice by the sheer amount of coverage given to peace movement activities. Newspaper and television could have relegated the mass action at Greenham common and over Easter to the marginal space accorded to some mass demonstration in the past, but they chose to treat them as the most significant story of the day. That is absolutely right. CND has had enormous press coverage, which has done a great disservice to the Labour party because it has brought before the minds of the electorate the arguments for and against having a nuclear deterrent. Most people believe that we need a nuclear deterrent.

The *News on Sunday* was published during the past six months and has now completely failed. Opposition Members cannot stomach the fact that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dover made clear, the public are not interested in an anti-sexist, anti-nuclear, highly political, left-of-centre newspaper. It just does not sell, and that is the problem. The hon. Member for Hammersmith advocated subsidising the newspaper industry because, in my opinion, he does not think that enough newspapers propagate his views. Such subsidising would mean that the *News on Sunday*, which no one wants to read, would still exist now and next year, and would run up enormous losses.

We have had a taste of what a Labour Government might do to a free press in this country. Whenever a newspaper has seriously offended either the Labour party or certain sections of it they have banned it, or tried to ban it, or tried to drive it out of business. My council—Kirklees council—stopped the local library taking News

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

International publications, as did many other councils, merely because they did not like News International's way of doing business. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) tried to maintain a ban on News International's publications, too. When the Labour party came to power in Islington, one of the first things it tried to do was to put the *Islington Gazette* out of business, because that organ had been pointing out to local readers the council's political lunacies, its waste of ratepayers' money and its intolerance. Islington council wasted about £100,000 of ratepayers' money on its own alternative Left-wing newspaper. That is a good example of what subsidies for the newspaper industry under a Labour Government would almost certainly mean.

I am worried about how *News on Sunday* was financed. It was never going to be a profitable commercial concern; it got on to the bookstalls—and off them again—only because of the generosity of several Left-wing Labour authorities. It was not even as though those authorities were spending their ratepayers' money on the newspaper. They were spending employees' pension funds on it, which was a disgrace. I hope the Government will include such pension funds in the Local Government Bill that is now going through the House.

Brent council was advised by stockbrokers that it should not invest in *News on Sunday*—yet it went ahead and invested a quarter of a million pounds in the first six issues of the newspaper. It also spent an awful lot of money advertising in it. Several other councils did the same—Ealing, Camden, Lothian, Southwark and Lambeth councils, for instance. They should all be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Councils in the north of England, too—Cleveland and Derbyshire—put money into the newspaper. We should examine how these local councils have been trying to usurp the free press by wasting ratepayers' money on maintaining uncommercial and unpopular Left-wing newspapers.

We have already discussed the problems with the press. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) spoke of the unbiased television broadcasting that we have in this country. However, I believe that it is important that the concerns felt by some of us about the matter are voiced in this House. Television has a special place within the world of communications. It is beamed straight into the homes of families and there is a limited choice available. If television programmes show bias it is a serious matter.

The media monitoring unit was set up in 1985 and spent a year monitoring the output of the BBC and ITV. It produced a document that showed that there was a considerable amount of political bias in those companies' current affairs programmes.

One programme that survived extremely well from that study was Channel 4's "A Week in Politics". That is a highly political programme, but it illustrates that it is possible to maintain political balance when dealing with such contentious issues. However, "Panorama", supposedly the BBC's flagship, was found to have shown political bias in nearly a third of its programmes. In fact, 24 per cent. of its programmes showed bias to the Left, but only 7 per cent. showed bias to the Right.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: This is an important issue, but perhaps it is inevitable and proper that serious current affairs programmes should address Government policies and will put the Government in the position of having to explain and justify the changes that they bring forward. Surely that is a proper function of such programmes. Such an approach may be interpreted as a Leftward bias, but in reality those programmes are giving a proper, close scrutiny to Government policies.

Mr. Riddick: That is perfectly fair and I accept that. I believe that the media monitoring unit also accepted that principle. That unit studied programmes to discover whether both sides of an argument were given the opportunity to put their case. Of course, Government policies will be subject to the closest scrutiny. However, it is important that the Opposition's or the alliance's case is also given close scrutiny. The media monitoring unit showed that there was a considerable Left-wing bias.

"World in Action" came out as the most biased programme of the lot. Of the 34 programmes monitored, 10 were non-political; 13 had a Left-wing bias and four had a Right-wing bias. That is not good enough.

Some people may argue that, if we have some programmes that are biased to the Left and some biased to the Right, at the end of the day, the end product is an unbiased approach. In reality it simply gives us more biased programmes.

It is important that the BBC and the IBA should carefully consider their responsibilities for providing programmes, especially current affairs programmes, that are impartial. I hope that those authorities take that on board.

There is a great danger in arguing for more interference in the media in this country. I merely ask the television companies to consider what I have said. Certainly, I would resist any efforts made by politicians of any party to try to interfere with the press. I believe that, on balance, although the press is not perfect, we have one of the freest presses in the world. I am pleased and proud about that.

1.9 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): All hon. Members would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on winning the ballot — that is always the first and most important thing to do — and on the broad, interesting and moderate way in which he moved the motion. Some aspects, such as the suggestion that a media board should be set up, I do not agree with, but there are many others that I do. I thank hon. Members and my hon. Friends for their contributions. Even if the House has not been well attended, we have managed to have an interesting debate. There has been much wide-ranging and thoughtful agreement and I hope that the comments that have been made will be read by the Press Council, journalists, newspaper proprietors and unionists because much of what has been said is of value.

I would like to start my remarks by quoting a character in Tom Stoppard's play "Night and Day", who said:

"I am with you on the freedom of the press. It is the newspapers I can't stand."

Probably every hon. Member has sympathised with that comment at one moment or another. If I were to make a general comment it would be that I suspect that every hon. Member wants the best of both worlds. We would like a free and varied press in which contrary opinions can be read, but we would also like a press that is not excessively intrusive, a point strongly made by the hon. Member for

Hammersmith, especially affecting those who cannot defend themselves. Because we are human, we would also like a press that is interesting but that does not misrepresent or misreport us — a press that gives prominence to the jewels in our speeches and our lives as well as to our howlers. Such perfection is not likely to happen and hon. Members disagree on how to achieve that ideal world, the best of both worlds.

If we go back in history, I wonder how much of the debate our predecessors would have had in the 1930s or in the last century. If one considers editorial interference, my favourite newspaper proprietor in literature is without any question Lord Copper in Evelyn Waugh's marvellous book, "Scoop". As it is Friday, perhaps the House will forgive me if I read a few lines of that 1938 book. Lord Copper was advising William Boot, the naturalist who has suddenly been told by mistake to go off and report on the war in Somalia, how to handle himself:

"With regard to policy, I expect you already have your own views . . . Remember that the Patriots are in the right and are going to win. *The Beast*—

which was Lord Copper's paper—

"stands by them foursquare. But they must win quickly. The British public has no interest in a war which drags on indecisively. A few sharp victories, some conspicuous acts of personal bravery on the Patriots' side and a colourful entry into the capital. That is *The Beast* policy for the war."

There is an interesting observation in the page before, when Lord Copper greeted Mr. Boot and said:

"Come in, Mr. Boot. This is a great pleasure. I have wanted to meet you for a long time. It is not often that the Prime Minister and I agree, but we see eye to eye about your style."

Times change. I wonder whether Lord Wilson would ever have agreed with that comment. It is interesting to reflect that in the 1930s people were making the same comments as we have made today.

I am conscious that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to the complaints about not getting a proper mention in the national press. The hon. Gentleman will perhaps remember the sad fate of Mr. Harding, the elderly warden of Barchester hospital, the character at the centre of Anthony Trollope's novel "The Warden" who to his horror suddenly finds himself pilloried in the national newspaper the *Jupiter* because of the salary that he receives for looking after the elderly in his almshouse. Trespassing on the patience of the House on a Friday, I want to read a paragraph from "The Warden". The offending article in the *Jupiter* ends with the words:

"We must express an opinion that nowhere but in the Church of England, and only there among its priests, could such a state of moral indifference be found."

Trollope goes on to state:

"I must for the present leave my readers to imagine the state of Mr. Harding's mind after reading the above article. They say that forty thousand copies of the *Jupiter* are daily sold, and that each copy is read by five persons at the least. Two hundred thousand readers then would hear this accusation against him; two hundred thousand hearts would swell with indignation at the griping injustice, the bare-faced robbery of the warden of Barchester Hospital! And how was he to answer this? How was he to open his inmost heart to this multitude, to these thousands, the education, the polished, the picked men of his own country, how show them that he was no robber, no avaricious lazy priest scrambling for gold, but a retiring humble-spirited man, who had innocently taken what had innocently been offered to him?"

Mr. Leighton: He deserves the right of reply.

Mr. Renton: I will come to the hon. Gentleman's point. Many hon. Members must have experienced or believed that their constituents have experienced the same feelings as the warden of Barchester hospital.

There is nothing particularly new about problems with complaints as outlined in this important debate. At the heart of the matter lies the comments that ordinary people get badly hurt. That theme was recounted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Hon. Members also asked whether tabloid journalism is getting worse and they asked about the domination of newspapers by a few proprietors.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred with great eloquence to comments in the press which he thought would sow racial divisions. With my responsibilities at the Home Office for immigration, I hope that he or his constituents will take up those matters with the Commission for Racial Equality, if such cases occur again and if he believes that articles are sowing racial divisions. The hon. Gentleman's comments and allegations should not go uninvestigated or unanswered. I hope that if he is concerned about those matters in the future he will look into them with the CRE. As far as possible, he will have help from the Home Office in that respect.

Mr. Soley: I have discussed that possibility on at least one occasion. One tends to leave it to the aggrieved person or group and that is a mistake which we all make at times because of our work load. I recognise that the Home Office, particularly with the Public Order Act 1986, was particularly helpful in making the rules more explicit. If we can have the assistance of the Home Office in cases where the press has used a story in a manner which encourages racial hatred, that would be much appreciated by the CRE and by many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Renton: I am trespassing on the responsibilities of my colleague at the Home Office who deals with community relations. However, I have no doubt that he would be anxious to give the hon. Gentleman the sort of help for which he is asking. We will be pleased to try to follow that up.

I shall turn to some of the wider issues and specific points raised in the debate. The Government are committed to safeguarding the freedom of the press. Those words lie firmly at the heart of the motion moved by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. However, that does not mean that freedom of the press should be unlimited. To assert that is to overlook the rights, liberties and duties with which unlimited press licence would certainly conflict.

I do not believe that after due reflection anyone would argue, in the cause of press freedom, that it is right for a person to be defamed with impunity, for obscene material to be published with impunity, for legal proceedings to be prejudiced with impunity, for an individual's privacy to be invaded without restraint, for all statutory protection for state secrets to be removed or for the public service duty of confidentiality to be abandoned. In all of those cases there is a difficulty as to where a balance should be struck. If there were no arguments about such questions we would know that we were not living in a free society. The fact that press freedom competes at so many points with other freedoms, rights and duties highlights the advantages of not treating the press on a special footing in the eyes of the law. Still less should we contemplate a special role for Government.

[Mr. Renton]

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) made a thoughtful and powerful speech about the present economic health of the newspaper industry in this country. I quote:

"Ancient printing equipment that would fit naturally into a museum of printing is at last being replaced. Traditional manning levels and restrictive practices are on the way out, in most cases by agreement between unions and management."

Those are not the words of a newspaper tycoon and still less are they the words of a fellow member of the Government. They are written in a *Financial Times* survey of 27 July by Mr. Ray Snoddy. He is a widely respected journalist. It was Mr. Snoddy who pointed out that it was the regional newspapers that pioneered many of the new developments such as the use of computer technology and colour and the introduction of direct input. I am pleased to report that the Advertising Association expects a real growth of around 10 per cent. this year in regional press advertising. Mr. Snoddy concluded his survey by saying:

"Despite the proliferation of electronic media the process of renewal in the British newspaper industry should help to ensure its future is secure."

That is an important and satisfactory economic base from which to start. That point was made by my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth, West and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

I doubt whether the process of renewal would have happened without the Government's employment legislation. I say that conscious of the interest of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) in that subject. I also doubt whether it would have happened without the Government's encouragement for the spirit of enterprise, sound financial management and determination to keep costs down. It is satisfactory—I say this from sharing a past interest in employment matters with the hon. Member for Newham, North-East — that, although disagreement as to which union should represent the entire work force at Wapping still exists, there seems to be progress towards acknowledgement of the fact that there has to be a single bargaining unit.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Minister recall that the article from the *Financial Times* that he quoted said that the new technology had been introduced by co-operation with the unions? The only example of which I am aware in which new technology was introduced by confrontation and not agreement is at Wapping and it has caused trouble ever since. The workers at Wapping are unhappy with the present arrangements and want to make changes.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman and I have crossed swords — in a thoroughly pleasant manner — in past Employment Bill Standing Committees. I am not as close to that Department as I used to be, but my impression from recent newspaper reports is that there has been progress, although the Wapping strike meant to the newspaper industry what the miners' strike of three years ago meant to the coal industry. The current progress is important to a new union deal that will accept a single bargaining unit. Surely the hon. Gentleman agrees that, despite the bitterness of the past, that can only represent progress.

Hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, have spoken about the concentration of ownership. It is in the nature of things that they may have much more to say about closures and mergers than about the rejuvenation of the industry, and the factors that have made it possible. However, I believe that the latter is by far the most significant development. Even taking account of the recent closures of *Sunday Today* and *News on Sunday*—I shall not repeat all the detailed statistics quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West —it should be stressed that the number of companies with a national newspaper interest has risen from eight in 1981 to 10 today.

Many of us have been particularly encouraged by the success of *The Independent*—the first quality national paper to be launched in this country for over 130 years—in carving out a niche at the top end of the market, and winning journalistic awards. I say that as one who is not unfamiliar both with being taken to task by correspondents of *The Independent*—over, for example, the content of our Immigration Bill—and with frankly disagreeing with the paper, as I did earlier this week over its reporting of the study that the Home Office is undertaking of DNA. *The Independent* is also a prime example of the growing trend towards the use of contract printing. It is now much easier to set up a newspaper without the huge investment required for printing equipment.

Let me deal next with the concentration of ownership. The views on the transfer of *Today* to News International last May, and on Mr. Murdoch's acquisition of 14·7 per cent. of Pearson plc, the publisher of the *Financial Times*, have already been well ventilated. I shall certainly bring the points that have been made today to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I repeat, however, that the decision by my right hon. and noble Friend to consent to the *Today* transfer on grounds of financial urgency, without an inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, saved the paper, along with some 500 jobs.

It is true that, as a result, News International increased its market share for popular dailies, but it did so by only 2·5 per cent. As for the *Financial Times*, I can assure the House that, while the newspaper remains profitable and continues to enjoy a paid-for circulation of over 25,000 —both those factors, I am glad to say, seem very likely to continue—any proposal to acquire the newspaper by News International, or any other proprietor with substantial newspaper interests, would automatically have to be referred to the MMC for an inquiry.

In line with the efforts being made to speed up decisions on merger proposals that are referred to the MMC, my right hon. and noble Friend announced on 8 October that the MMC has already said that it will complete future inquiries in the general run of newspaper mergers within two months, rather than the three allowed by law. That should make it more difficult for parties to contend that, in cases in which the target newspaper is in financial difficulties, an MMC inquiry is ruled out. I understand that other improvements in procedures are being considered.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Obviously, that point has been made in the House a number of times. But does the Minister not accept that it still does not add up to a substantial enough assurance? First, the MMC's record of

turning down takeovers of national newspapers is non-existent; secondly, I believe that the Secretary of State still has the final say. Why can he not make it clear in advance that such a takeover would not be acceptable?

Mr. Renton: That point was covered two or three days ago in the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It is impossible for the Secretary of State to say in advance, in a hypothetical situation, what he will do. My right hon. and learned Friend made it absolutely clear that no case had yet been put to him and that he could not rule on a hypothesis. The wording that he used about the Act was carefully considered, and I have no doubt that he meant it.

In line, therefore, with the changes that I have just mentioned, my right hon. and noble Friend is very conscious of press freedom when considering changes in newspaper ownership, and he will continue to safeguard it. In this connection, I support what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley. In our view, the legislation should not be used to facilitate meddlesome Government intervention in the affairs of newspapers. That could threaten the free circulation of news and opinion. To many of us, one of the great virtues of this country's heritage of press freedom is precisely that the Government's role is so limited. I say that even though this limited Government role does not make life easy for a Minister standing at the Dispatch Box whose primary responsibilities are for immigration and broadcasting policy.

There is still an assumption in some quarters that the Government are responsible for, or must pass judgment upon, each and every activity that takes place within these shores. I totally reject such an assumption. Our framework of press freedom provides as clear an illustration as anyone could wish of the fact that the British people have never wanted to live in either a nanny or a Big Brother state. We should always remember that before reaching too hastily for the latest legislative nostrum about the newspapers of the day for which the politicians do not care.

Before I turn to the latest legislative nostrum, perhaps I should say a few words about the Press Council. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)—who, like my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), very much regrets that he cannot be here for the wind-up because of a constituency engagement—raised doubts about the Press Council and its efficacy. So did the hon. Member for Gordon in his powerful speech. I remind the House that it was on the recommendation of the first Royal Commission that a General Council of the press was established to provide a framework of self-regulation for the press. The council has 18 professional and 18 lay members under an independent chairman.

Much has been said in the debate about the Press Council being toothless. Other unkind epithets have been used. However, during the last 10 years the Press Council's case load has trebled and it has sharpened up its procedures. For instance, since 1978 it has had an official conciliator who can employ informal procedures to reach agreement between the parties after a complaint. Since 1984 it has operated what is described as a fast track correction procedure, a procedure that expects editors to correct significiant inaccuracies within six days. The Press Council aims to rule on any complaint of such inaccuracies within a fortnight.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith referred to codes of ethics for journalists. The National Union of Journalists has a code of professional conduct, as does the Institute of Journalists, but the Press Council's adjudications constitute an important set of principles for the press. In 1985 it published a digest of these principles in convenient book form.

As to the complaint that the Press Council lacks teeth, some journalists say to me that they feel that it is breathing down their necks. The Press Council's shaming condemnation of such matters as the invasion of the privacy of the royal family, to which the hon. Member for Hammersmith alluded in his speech, have attracted wide and deeply felt public support. Editors have to be responsive to public opinion. We should all note the fact that the circulation war rivals of an offending paper are not reluctant to emphasise a Press Council condemnation of another paper.

Mr. Soley: It is not just the toothlessness of the Press Council that troubles us. The 1977 Royal Commission report put its finger on the problem when it said that the Press Council seems to exist to protect the press from the public, rather than the other way round. The Royal Commission touched on a raw nerve for the Press Council, but perhaps it was a real one. I wonder why the Press Council could not do anything about the stories that I cited in relation to the university of London research. If only half of that research is accurate, it must cause the Press Council deep concern. Does the Minister agree that the Press Council should give an annual report on the standards of journalism, so that we can have a more informed debate on the matter—perhaps on an annual basis?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman's last proposal is not unattractive and I hope that the members of the Press Council will take careful note of the comments that have been made in the debate.

My last point relates to legislation—the point on which we come to differ with Opposition Members. I said earlier that our framework of press freedom was the antithesis of the Big Brother state. We need to examine carefully Opposition Members' proposals on the form that legislation might take. The hon. Member for Hammersmith and others referred to the possibility of a formal statutory right of reply. That idea was very well ventilated in the House in 1983 in relation to Frank Allaun's Bill. The general judgment at that time was that, while the idea was attractive in principle, it was impracticable. I note that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) described the Bill in an article in *Punch* as

"generally impracticable and wholly desirable, probably unworkable and certainly essential".

The right hon. Gentleman revels in such paradox. I can only marvel at this fascinating glimpse of the Labour party's policy-making process. If the same rigorously consistent thought processes played a part in Labour's manifesto this summer, I understand why the Labour party got into such a muddle about its defence policy and nuclear disarmament. But that is a debate for another day.

The idea of having a right of reply is, in a sense, attractive to us all. Let me cite a personal example. When I became Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office just over two years ago, I found to my surprise in the report of my appointment in *The Times* the following

[Mr. Renton]

day the announcement that I had been Great Uncle Bulgaria in the Wombles pop group. I really do not know where *The Times* got that information, although admittedly some of my friends said that it was much the most interesting thing that had ever happened to me. As everyone in the House knows, the Wombles were a particularly nice pop group. I rang up *The Times* the following day and complained that the story was not true. There had been two fairly flattering column inches about my appointment. However, the next day, sunk somewhere at the botton of page four or five appeared a tiny two-line statement to the effect that any reference to Mr. Renton's previous career in the music industry had been incorrect. That is all that *The Times* ever said.

Mr. Corbett: The Minister reminds me of something that the late Lord Shinwell said when chastising journalists. He said that when they go to check the cuttings they believe that they are checking the facts.

Mr. Renton: There is something of Mark Twain in that remark.

The consequence of this interesting mistake by *The Times* was more evident in Hong Kong than anywhere else. As Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office one of my responsibilities was for Hong Kong. As far as Hong Kong was concerned, I was Minister for Hong Kong. I was sent a copy of the *South China Morning Post*, the leading English daily in Hong Kong, in which the banner headline was, in effect, "New Minister for Hong Kong Ex-Pop Star". Because of the minuscule correction in *The Times*, so far as I know the *South China Morning Post* never contradicted the statement that I was an ex-pop star and Hong Kong still believes that I was Great Uncle Bulgaria.

On a more serious note, in many ways it would have been pleasant for me if I could have insisted on the right of reply, with an equal number of column inches pointing out that damage had been done to my career by this false attribution. If I had been able to do that, I think that the end result for me, and other Members of Parliament, would be a very much more boring national press. If we all had the right of reply, either the newspapers would write uncontentious news, for fear that we would all occupy their columns the following day, or our replies would occupy their columns, which would read like agony letters.

Mr. Leighton: We are not the only ones who need protection.

Mr. Renton: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It is not just us. We are the ones who least need protecting.

I remind the House of Mr. Pooter's correspondence with his local newspaper in "The Diary of a Nobody" and his great irritation at the fact that the local newspaper had not reported that he had been to the Lord Mayor's ball. I do not believe that we want our press to have to produce that type of editorial matter. I recognise the sincerely held views expressed in favour of introducing a legal right of reply on grounds of public interest and in defence of the individual. I shall look forward to seeing the contents of the Unfair Reporting and Right of Reply Bill, to be introduced by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). Motivations are not always totally pure. A memorandum published by the Labour party's national executive committee in 1982 in advocating the introduction of a right to reply Bill said that the measure would draw some of the claws of the press magnates. The warning is there — there are those who need such measures as the first step towards reducing the freedom of the press as we know it.

If there is not to be a right of reply, what legislation does the Labour party have in mind? The hon. Member for Hammersmith talked about a media enterprise board. It is in precisely this respect that I profoundly disagree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. He spoke about the media enterprise board providing finance, buying machinery and organising distribution. But what would it distribute? That point was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley. There is no difficulty in distributing what people want to read — what is easily saleable and what they want to have on their doorsteps. The difficulty is in distributing what they do not want and what is forced down their throats. I fear that this is precisely the sort of exercise in which such a media enterprise board would become involved. I should be interested if the hon. Member for Hammersmith will tell us whether he believes that the Government should set up "a launch fund to assist new publications in order to encourage the diversity necessary in a healthy democracy" — the pledge in the Labour manifesto last June. Since then, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley said, we have seen local authorities using their pension funds and trade unions and even a Socialist estate agent investing in the launch funds for the ill-fated *News on Sunday*. It gives me no satisfaction to hear of the demise of any newspaper, but that newspaper's experiences suggest that what would be involved is not launch aid but a perpetual state lifeboat. What would this newspaper say? Where would be the diversity so necessary to a healthy democracy of which the Labour manifesto spoke?

Mr. Soley: May I remind the Minister that the Dutch Printing Corporation and its Scandinavian counterparts manage successfully? If he examines these organisations he will gain an idea of what we have in mind. There are issues more important than the question of who will read a newspaper. One course is to go down market to sex, violence and royal family stories to encourage a sufficient readership to attract advertising. The alternative is to go up market, as *The Independent* has done successfully. There is missing an element of the press that crosses a variety of boundaries and offers a quality of journalism that has gone missing since the demise of newspapers such as the the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Herald*, which had a readership of 9 million. Despite that readership, these newspapers could not survive. Their demise was unconnected with readership levels.

Mr. Renton: I do not remember the reason why the *News Chronicle* did not survive. It seems, however, that the hon. Gentleman is advancing a thoroughly uneconomic argument. Newspapers survive because they have a readership, and that is the lesson that *The Independent* has taught us. Shares in that newspaper are owned by 35 of our leading financial institutions, and no one is allowed to have a shareholding of more than 10 per cent. I think that the maximum holding currently is 8 per cent. *The Independent* is devoted to giving serious, high-quality independent news. I am glad to say that it is surviving.

Perhaps I should bring my remarks to a conclusion now because I am aware that other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Soley: As I have said, the combined sales of the *News Chronicle*, *Reynolds News* and the *Daily Herald* was 9 million, which means that these titles went bust for reasons unconnected with sales.

Mr. Renton: With respect, I suspect that that cannot be right. The demise of these newspapers was due either to excessively expensive working practices or because people's tastes moved away from them. It is clear from the success of the tabloids nowadays that people's tastes change.

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Renton: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I shall not give way to him. I wish to bring my remarks to a conclusion so that I can let others speak and allow the hon. Member for Hammersmith to have his final say.

The encouragement of diversity is at the heart of the proposal that lies within the motion, but would the hon. Member for Hammersmith be rushing to the Adam Smith Institute or the Freedom Association offering them funds for the propagation of their views, or would he be interested only in reviving *Labour Weekly* at the taxpayers' expense? Judging by what the staff said when the Leader of the Opposition and his fellow revisionists shut down *Labour Weekly*, that might not be such a good idea. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to explain when he replies what he considers to be the diverse views that the public are being denied by the wicked market which the Labour party alone, which is noted for its tolerance and broadmindedness, can bring them. It is not the fault of the market that the *Socialist Worker* fails to match the circulation of the *Daily Express*. Could it perhaps be the fault of the product itself?

We do not think that the way to a free, better and more diverse press lies in more legislation and Government interference. In the suggested approach there is a clear contradiction in terms. It leads to Orwellian thoughts of readers being made to read *Labour Weekly* because it is good for them, rather like the eating of bran and brown bread.

Let the self-regulators look to their laurels; but I believe that the answer to some of the problems that have been mentioned is self-regulation. Let the self-regulators remember Mark Twain's words:

"We write frankly and freely and then we modify before we print".

The message of this debate for me is that more modification, particularly for individuals who cannot speak for themselves, would be welcome.

1.48 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I echo the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on making this debate possible. We spend far too little time on considering these matters.

I am sure that it will be agreed on both sides of the House that press freedom is not an extra option in a parliamentary democracy; it is an essential ingredient of that democracy and, indeed, a litmus test of whether it exists. I can think of no hon. Member who would vote against the notion of our general support for press freedom—that is, unless it is put to the test. The most recent example of that was mentioned by my hon. Friend and others, when Mr. Murdoch's News International gobbled up *Today*. When that happened, it found a welcome from all but a handful of Conservative Members. Our complaint was that it was done in such a hurry that it denied the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the chance to examine the matter. I do not accept for a second that it is simply a matter of a newspaper's circulation and market share. Of course, that is one of the considerations, but other things come into it. That illustrates the difference between the two sides of the House on the issue.

Our complaint is not against individual proprietors; it is the fact that the ownership of newspapers by a person such as Mr. Murdoch sends a message to and sets the climate for staff working on those newspapers. Even if they do not get detailed instructions from Mr. Murdoch, they soon learn and understand that, if they want material published in the newspapers that he owns, it must be written in a certain way and a certain style or else it will not see the light of day.

That is why we got so angry about the takeover of *Today*. It took no account of the fact that Mr. Murdoch, now an American citizen, rules a media empire that spans three continents and here takes in *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *News of the World* and a publication registered at the Post Office as a newspaper and known as *The Sun*. That is without detailing Mr. Murdoch's interest in television, broadcasting, radio stations and so on. Lately we have heard about his aspirations about the *Financial Times*.

I welcome what the Minister said about the automatic referral of any takeover bid for the *Financial Times* by Mr. Murdoch or anyone else to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; but the Minister did not say very much at all. It is automatic under the legislation that the MMC is required to examine that, but on grounds of urgency, as in the case of *Today*, it could be said that any bid for the *Financial Times* should go ahead. As demonstrated in the case of *Today*, that is likely to happen.

What is missing in the legislation is not the power for politicians to interfere, but the power to protect freedoms that are very much at risk. The *Financial Times* demonstrates that exactly. Its strength, reputation and integrity do not rest in its circulation. Its circulation is tiny and quite narrow. It is the reputation, the quality that that paper has established, which makes it a success in the market place.

I should like to make it clear on behalf of the Opposition that we are not in the business of picking saints and sinners among the owners of the newspapers or other media outlets. We say that growing monopoly ownership of the press alongside growing domination of television and broadcasting worldwide is unacceptable and a threat to our democracy. It is a democracy that belongs to us all, every citizen, not just those with the deepest pockets and purses who can buy it. That seemed to be the nub of the argument of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), which terrifies the Opposition.

I do not mind how the media moguls are perceived, whether they are seen as saints or sinners. We say that a properly free press and media are too essential a part of our democracy to be entrusted to a few pairs of hands with the pound notes to make that ownership possible.

This is the difference. We are not talking about toothpaste, baked beans or even British Gas or British Telecom. We are concerned about publications and programmes that can and do have a powerful influence on

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

the minds and attitudes of people who are in the process of helping to make our democracy work; yet the simple truth of press freedom is this. Press freedom rests on nothing more substantial than whether a newspaper makes a profit—not even whether it has sufficient readers. My hon. Friends are right about the *News Chronicle*. There was not a problem with readership. There were advertising problems, but, if I remember correctly, those running the *News Chronicle* worked out that they would make a bigger, quicker buck out of closing the paper and selling the presses to the *Daily Mail*. That cash register attitude towards the press is reflected in the Government's attitude towards broadcasting, which is part of the argument about freedom of the press because an increasing number of people rely heavily on television and radio for news and information about current affairs.

The Government should be thoroughly ashamed of their attitude to the BBC. The former Tory party chairman, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), went on Independent Television News to announce a vendetta against the BBC with allegations of bias about Kate Adie's reporting of the United States surprise attack on Libya. Whatever the merits of that attack — and they were few — those remarks were an insult not just to the experience and integrity of Kate Adie. More dangerously, in the context of setting a climate, they signalled to those responsible for making and transmitting programmes, especially news and current affairs programmes, that the Government had declared war on the BBC. After all, the allegations were made by a senior Cabinet Minister, not some whipper-snapper from the Back Benches.

I make it clear that we shall use any influence that we have to support and encourage people at the BBC to resist and repel such Government interference. We seek no favours from the BBC. We merely expect it to exert and proclaim once again the editorial integrity and balance on which its well-deserved, much copied and admired reputation around the world is based. That is no mean achievement. The standards established by the BBC set the standards for the handling of news and current affairs by independent television when it was set up. If it is true that ITN news bulletins are to become tabloids of the air, such a down-market dive will do nothing to enhance press freedom and to help our democracy to function.

It does our cause in relation to the BBC no good, however, if the chairman of the corporation is seen to be pandering to the whims of the Government. The House will recall the argument about the appointment of Mr. Howell James — a known member of the Prime Minister's kitchen Cabinet during the general election— as the BBC's director of corporate affairs. When I complained to the chairman, Mr. Marmaduke Hussey asserted that the appointment was made only on merit. If that is what he says, I accept it. Astonishingly, however, the chairman then told me in relation to Mr. James:

> "I am unaware that he has a 'special relationship' with the Prime Minister."

The chairman of the BBC must have been the only person within these shores to be unaware of that. I certainly find his denial very hard to swallow.

The danger of that appointment, which has been illustrated by other appointments, is that it gives the impression that known public support for the Conservative party is the main qualification for appointment to the BBC. That impression is harmful to the BBC and does nothing to enhance the corporation's integrity or editorial independence.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is making a ridiculous allegation which would be entirely regretted, resented and disapproved by top management at the BBC and by the board. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the vice-chairman of the governors is none other than a former Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury, now in another place. I am very pleased that the vice-chairmanship is held by that person because it is proof of the impartiality and non-party-political nature of the governors and top management of the BBC. For the sake of the BBC, the hon. Gentleman should withdraw his allegations.

Mr. Corbett: The right hon. Member for Chingford will note that the Minister did not spring to his defence. I have exchanged correspondence with the chairman of the BBC about my allegations. Whether or not what I am saying is true, an impression is being given that is damaging to the integrity of the BBC.

I want to illustrate the Government's real attitude to freedom of the press. On Monday, in this city — the nation's capital — it was asserted on behalf of the Government that newspapers have no role in exposing scandals in the Security Service. Instead, it was argued on the Government's behalf, newspapers should quietly creep away, tap a Government Minister on the shoulder and have a word in his or her ear. If that is not a licence to print and publish only at the Government's behest and with their consent, I do not know what is. That is the road to a censored, controlled press and media. "Tell us first", say the Government, "and we will tell you if it is all right to tell others".

I turn to another example of what the Government grandly describe as a free press. This is difficult, because it concerns *The Star* newspaper. It was a newspaper on what we shall call the underbelly of the tabloid pile. Lord Stevens, ennobled by the Prime Minister, found himself in the role of Lord Porn in a deal that he did with something that was laughably called *Sunday Sport*—it has the cheek to maintain a Lobby correspondent on these premises— to salvage *The Star*. It was boobs and bonking on every page, including the wicked exploitation of a 15-year-old girl with large breasts; and, I am told, topless pictures were taken of her before her sixteenth birthday in breach of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, although they were not published. When, on behalf of journalists working at *The Star's* London office at that time, Mr. David Buchan reported their views that *The Star*, under the editorship of Michael Gabbert, was a disgrace, he was fired. He did no more than report the views of his chapel. That dispute has now been resolved, although it has cost Mr. Buchan his job. So, in the search for profit, owners, including those with peerages, are prepared to pander to the lowest common denominator.

We believe that lowering standards of taste and decency does nothing to enhance entertainment or understanding. I hope that *The Star* will now recover, as Mr. Galbert has gone back to his sewer now. As an illustration of the cynical attitude of some sections of the press, I want to describe what happens on the back-bench of *The Sun* when a so-called "true story alert" is sometimes called. Sitting on top of a VDU there is a squeaky rubber likeness of the

Prime Minister, exactly like the one I am holding up, which is usually used by dogs to chew or by parents to frighten their children. It is held aloft and squeaked—I shall not do it in the Chamber, although this one is capable of it—when the senior executive on duty on the bench at the time comes across a story which, in his opinion, contains some true facts. That is such a rarity that not much squeaking goes on on the back-bench of *The Sun*.

Such activities remind me of a bit of doggerel by Humbert Wolfe which describes the attitude of many of those on *The Sun* newspaper:

"You cannot hope
To bribe or twist,
Thank God! the
British journalist.
But, seeing what
The man will do
Unbribed, there's
No occasion to."

The Government are not indifferent to press freedom; quite the reverse. They have allowed their patronage and power to be used to ensure that even information officers in the Civil Service have been turned into an arm of Government. A lively, growing democracy needs and demands more sources of information on which to make decisions. That is one of the hallmarks of a genuine democracy; but the duty of the Government to provide information upon which citizens can make choices and reach decisions has been grossly interfered with, largely through the role of the information department at 10 Downing street. That office is critically responsible for offering stories, views and opinions to most of the media of the press and of broadcasting. The person who rules that office has been described by the *Mail on Sunday* as the real deputy Prime Minister. He was described as such by the impeccably Tory *Mail on Sunday*. In spite of that, I believe it is an extremely good newspaper. That high office, filled by Mr. Bernard Ingham, helps to set the political agenda and influence what journalists write. In that sense, if that office did not do that there would be no point in having it.

The *Mail on Sunday* says that Mr. Ingham is the person charged with, paid for and employed to sell this Government. There were distant times when that office was held by people who had a more open brief and who let the press know what the Government were up to and did not try to use that office to sell the Government's wares.

It must be of concern to us when two senior Government information officers leave the Government service — they had been working closely with Bernard Ingham during their careers—to go directly to work for the Tory party. Christine Wall left to work at the Tory party headquarters in Smith square and Alex Pagett left to work in the Scottish Office to attempt the impossible job of trying to recover Tory fortunes in Scotland. I do not complain of their professional decision to move. What I am complaining about is the abuse of position practised by Mr. Ingham, with the support of the Prime Minister, in manipulating what should be an open and honourable role for information officers in Whitehall.

Such appointments speak volumes about the Government's attempts to manipulate the news for narrow, party interests. That contrasts with the scene when Minister stand at the Dispatch Box and make speeches about introducing legislation preventing elected local councils from publishing straightforward, factual material to enable ratepayers to know what is going on and why. Every day of the week people such as Bernard Ingham act on behalf of the Government for no more than pure, petty, narrow, party-political reasons.

Yes, the Opposition are more interventionist. We want a Government who will intervene on the side of democracy, a Government who will act to protect and extend the freedom and open expression of diverse voices and opinions in our press and media for all groups of citizens, especially those largely unheard in our ethnic community.

There must be proper control of the spread of monopoly ownership. We should do what other nations do to prevent foreign ownership of the press and the broadcasting media. We must encourage and enable more voices to be heard. If it is right to require ITV stations to support Channel 4 by a levy on their advertising revenue, that principle could be equally applied to the printed media to assist the development of more papers with, I hope, more points of view reflected.

Mr. Renton: I do not question the passion with which the hon. Member is now speaking, but can he tell us if it was right for a council, such as Southwark borough council, to invest £250,000 of the staff pension fund in the Left-wing newspaper *News on Sunday*, which has now gone bust? Did that council consult the future pensioners? Does the hon. Gentleman think that that was a proper use of that fund?

Mr. Corbett: I am not quite sure what Conservative criticisms and objections on the *News on Sunday* are about. Let us find out. The Minister has said that their objections are based on the fact that that newspaper has gone bust. However, I cannot imagine anyone in a local council or in a commercial business knowingly and recklessly putting money into something which he or she knew was going bust.

Mr. David Shaw: That is what the council did.

Mr. Corbett: If that is the objection, I understand it, but I suspect that it is not.

There are plenty of councils — Birmingham city council is one of them — that invest in commercial enterprises and make money on behalf of the cities and ratepayers. Is there an objection to that? Are the Conservatives' objections founded on the fact that a loss was made?

The decision regarding investment in *News on Sunday* properly belonged to elected members of the council. The judgment was theirs right or wrong. They are accountable directly to the electorate for that decision.

Mr. Riddick: The stockbrokers, Fielding Newson Smith and Co., advised Brent council that it should not invest in that Sunday newspaper. Therefore, the council had sound commercial advice that the newspaper would not be a commercial and viable enterprise.

Mr. Corbett: What the hon. Gentleman has just said is news to me. However, I am prepared to accept his point because it would be impertinent of me to speak on behalf of locally elected councils that made their own decisions in a democratic way. That is why Labour Members are such passionate believers in elected local government, unlike Conservative Members. Some decisions will please us and some will not. That is just tough luck.

Mr. Soley: Would it not be easier to accept the Government's complaints, if such they are, if they had not spent millions of taxpayers' money on purchasing back BP shares at less than the price at which they were being sold on the market and, prior to that, on the same cost basis, selling things that were cheaper than they were on the market? If they did that for non-market reasons, clearly it was not for good investment, so what complaint do they have?

Mr. Corbett: My hon. Friend is quite right. Conservative Members speak with forked tongues about this. My hon. Friend said at the time of the BP issue that it was the only privatisation flotation with renationalisation built into it. Conservative Members say that they are concerned about the proper use of taxpayers' money, but literally millions of pounds were misused by the Government both in advertising those flotations and in massive handouts to those in the City who helped them to achieve them.

It is clear that we shall not agree. However, perhaps we can agree that—this is a truism—new technology, in the printing media and in the broadcasting media, has made possible some exciting developments, among them *The Independent*, and I echo the tributes that have been paid to that newspaper. New technology will do the same sort of thing in broadcasting. If properly used, the entry costs for setting up new publications and community radio stations are likely to fall dramatically. That gives us the opportunity, with the right kind of encouragement, to have many more voices heard and views reflected of those who now find it difficult, if not impossible, to get time on the air waves or their views in print.

It is my hope that all hon. Members and those who read the debate will agree with the principle that freedom in our printed press and in our broadcasting media is too important to be left solely to the whims of market forces. That is what the argument is about. We want no Government interference of any complexity, but we believe that there is a proper role for Government to assist and enable the blossoming and flourishing of views and voices in the media.

2.13 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on introducing the debate. Quite clearly the matter deserves the consideration of the House at regular intervals. He was right to bring it forward. I have listened with great care to remarks made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but I first want to take up some points made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who told us about the *Today* newspaper and his concern that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission so quickly agreed to its takeover.

The hon. Member for Erdington also mentioned the fact that Mr. Rupert Murdoch's activities in the press were causing some concern. The hon. Gentleman believed that Mr. Murdoch was giving a good deal of editorial direction to his editors to follow a Conservative line. At the same time, the hon. Gentleman must not forget that many Conservative Members are far from happy about the harassment of the royal family which appears in a number of Mr. Murdoch's newspapers. I trust that the hon. Member for Erdington would not suggest that such coverage reflects the views of Conservative Members. My colleagues and I deprecate that.

It is essential that newspapers make a profit, whether they are free newspapers, sold on the street corner or in newsagents. I cannot accept the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Erdington that the alternative is state control and state funding.

Mr. Corbett: No.

Mr. Thorne: I am afraid that that was the impression that the hon. Gentleman gave. There is such a facility in other countries, but as far as I am aware it occurs in countries that have complete control over the press. I am sure that the hon. Member for Erdington would not want that introduced in this country.

It is essential that newspapers are sold and profits made. Only by making profits can jobs be provided and preserved and returns given to the investors. Towards the end of his speech the hon. Member for Erdington referred to the unwilling investment by pensioners or pension fund beneficiaries in Southwark and elsewhere in the newspaper which has just gone under. We all deplore that, but clearly it was not founded on very sure foundations. The failure of that paper is entirely different from the guaranteeing or underwriting of the BP share issue. BP shareholders were guaranteed that, by investing in the company, they would not lose vast sums of money. That must have been to the benefit of the taxpayer as it encouraged many people to take up the opportunity to purchase shares. The investment of pensioners' funds is an entirely different matter. Clearly, we should not countenance that.

I sincerely hope that the district auditor will examine that case to see whether the councillors who spent the funds should be surcharged. I hope that the hon. Member for Erdington will agree that they should be surcharged if they were behaving irresponsibly with the pensioners' funds in those local authorities. The pensioners clearly had little or no opportunity to control their own funds. Therefore, it was wrong for a decision to be taken on their behalf. The money was wasted.

People tend to have views about what happens in the broadcasting media and see editorial freedom as an important aspect. The independent sector has to produce profits to exist and it does not depend upon national legislation or a requirement for everybody to pay licence fees for it to continue to exist. In those circumstances, quite rightly, the general public has a right to expect a high standard of editorial production.

It is not only Conservative Members who have been objecting about the behaviour of the BBC in recent years. I well remember the noble Lord Wilson complaining about it and saying that in his view a much more balanced news programme was provided by the independent network. Therefore, we are not alone in criticising the attitude and behaviour of the BBC. That is important and we should remember it. The early 1960s gave rise to a new attitude in the BBC and many of the new entrants to the organisation had a different interpretation of what the political content should be. Many people believe that the emergence of those entrants into senior positions now is a reason for concern.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I agree with the concern expressed by my hon. Friend. However, one has to be wary about Government intervention in order to correct something which, at the moment, seems to be an imbalance but, in the perspective of history, may not be so.

Mr. Thorne: That is certainly the case. It is acknowledged by many people in the media that complaints from both sides more or less balance the books. If they do not receive a fairly even number of complaints from both sides, they do not feel that they are doing their job effectively and satisfactorily. I accept that and it is the way in which things are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The question of editorial freedom and censorship is a sensitive one. We have to watch the situation carefully. On occasion the Press Council has given the impression that it exists more for the benefit of the press than the general public. It is not alone in that. There are many organisations which appear to be giving cover to the general public but which are funded by the industry that they are supposed to be monitoring. We have to be cautious about that but we do not have to over-react. Inevitably we rely upon a large measure of self-restraint and if we do not have that in the newspaper industry, clearly we do not have a free and fair press.

The right of reply is an important element. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned a particular experience of his. I hope that he is now claiming royalties on each appearance of Great Uncle Bulgaria because I am sure he ought to be entitled to some benefit from that. That would be fair and reasonable.

We do not want legislation to bring a Big Brother state into the equation. The worst thing we could possibly do would be to try to set up a sort of *Pravda* in this country. That is entirely unacceptable to the British way of life.

What happened to the *News on Sunday* was very unfortunate, but it was all part of the freedom to invest and to put a view forward. If the publisher of a newspaper does not catch the mood of the market, he cannot possibly expect to publish profitably and receive the benefit of his investment. If the Opposition parties believe that they have that opportunity, they should back their judgment and make such an investment. If they have not the ability to do that, they must let the free market get on with it, and try to ensure that they put the same pressure that Conservative Members would wish to apply if we felt that the matter was not being dealt with fairly and equitably.

I would welcome the opportunity for both sides of the House to debate this subject regularly.

2.25 pm

Mr. Soley: I must tell the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) that the Conservative party has the best *Pravda* in the Western world. It is called the *Daily Mail*. *Pravda* is the party paper; *Izvestia* is the state paper. Significantly, the Labour party has never been very successful at running a party paper. The Conservatives have been enormously successful at it.

No Opposition Member has ever said, or would ever say, that there should be central control of the press. We are saying that to leave it to the market puts minority groups and opinions at risk, because the market cannot be relied upon.

A media enterprise board no more means interference by the Government than does the existence of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The Minister is plainly an avid reader. May I ask him, as one of his next readership courses, to read Curran's book on power without responsibility?

Mr. Renton: I have it.

Mr. Soley: If the Minister has the book, he can look it up when he gets home. It explains why middle-market newspapers such as the *News Chronicle*—not, of course, a Labour paper—went to the wall. It had nothing to do with lack of readership. As I said in my earlier intervention, readership of the three papers I mentioned was about 9 million. They went to the wall because of the problem of advertising revenue.

Once a paper chooses to go down market — a Conservative Member said that it was impossible to be undercut by going down market and featuring items on sex and violence — and other papers are going for the quality end of the market, the A and B social groupings so loved by the high-income press which must advertise to please them, the middle range, whether Labour, Tory or Liberal, has had it. The middle range will be squeezed out, and that is exactly what happened.

When that happens, it means an acceleration of the monopolistic tendency. News International, Mr. Maxwell and some of the others are heading towards a total monopoly. It is not a monopoly yet; it is an oligopoly. But we are already losing factors vital to democracy — variety, and the ability to communicate freely.

As new technology takes us into new spheres, and as News International and similar organisations buy into them, a world communications network is developing which is controlled by a handful of individuals. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Ilford, South and his hon. Friends who fear centralised control would fear that. It need not be a Government who are in control; a dozen or so individuals can, through their control of a large organisation, control the international communications network. If that happens, we are in terrible trouble.

In my opening remarks, I mentioned a number of possible ways of reversing the trend towards monopoly. Yesterday, a judge intervened to allow *The Guardian* to publish, for the first time, what was said in court about "Spycatcher". There is some movement in the right direction. More than anything else, I desperately hope that in some small way this debate has opened up the question of the freedom of the press in this country and the problems that it faces. If we are at one in wanting a free press, however we define it, we have a duty to look at all the issues that have been discussed today and to do so in a way that will be helpful and constructive for the press and the media generally but that at the same time recognises that there is a genuine problem. At first, the——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

State Security

2.30 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you could give me your guidance. It has come to my notice that a written answer has been published by the Attorney-General announcing the decision that there are to be no prosecutions over the project Zircon affair.

You will recall that at the time there was an enormous amount of interest in the House and that some lively exchanges took place across the Dispatch Box. Is there any way, with your assistance, in which the Attorney-General might be required to come here to make a proper announcement from the Dispatch Box and then answer the questions that will undoubtedly be asked by hon. Members on both sides of the House? This seems to be an extremely sneaky and disreputable way of publishing information of this kind, especially as it has been done on a Friday afternoon when many hon. Members are either in their constituencies or are well on the way to them.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is clear that the Zircon affair is a matter of intense public interest, since it touches on freedom of information and on the fact that there was a parliamentary by-pass operation over a considerable period. Therefore, it is not good enough for the Attorney-General to seek to suggest, by means of a planted question from one of his trusted Back-Bench colleagues, that he will not institute proceedings in respect of Mr. Duncan Campbell and the alleged moles in that case. In the light of recent trials involving state secrets, such as "Spycatcher", one understands why the Attorney-General is tempted to run a mile when he sees the word "security", but surely it is not good enough to try to sneak through, on a Friday afternoon, a matter of such considerable public interest as this.

Mr. Speaker was personally and directly involved in the issue, in the sense that he stopped Members of Parliament from seeing the Zircon film, although it was readily available to those hon. Members who wished to see it. Given the involvement of Mr. Speaker in this issue, the sensitivity of the matter and security in general, surely the House ought to have been treated with proper courtesy by means of a full statement to the House. Rather than having to face prosecution under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, some hon. Members think that Duncan Campbell and his friends have done an immense service to democracy and that they ought properly to be considered, not for prosecution, but for an award in the new year's honours.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. First let me deal with the points that have been raised by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). Both hon. Members know that this is not a matter for the Chair. Written answers are not within the jurisdiction of the Chair. Both hon. Members have put their points on the record. All that I can suggest to them is that they should use their ingenuity to raise this matter in the House on an appropriate occasion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I take further points of order, I must say to the House that we cannot debate the matter now.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I referred in my speech in today's debate to the way in which the offices of the *New Statesman* were searched and ransacked and to the fact that the doors of the BBC in Scotland were smashed down to seek evidence. On a matter of such importance, surely it is wrong to sneak information of that kind through by way of a written answer. Ministers are sitting on the Treasury Bench. Are they unable to say something about it and give guidance about it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I said, this is not a matter for the Chair and I hope tht hon. Members will not persist with this argument. We have the Adjournment debate still to come. I can only advise hon. Members to seek other opportunities to raise the matter when the House resumes next week.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand and accept that the contents of a written answer cannot be a point of order for you. However, the House is troubled by the Zircon affair and the Bristol case, to which I referred, because we were unable to comment in the House about either case as a result of the sub judice rule, which I accept. Now that the Government have dealt with the matter in a written answer, there is no way that the issue can be discussed by the House. We seek your protection of the right of the House to comment on an issue that everyone agrees is of major importance. That means somehow dealing with the sub judice rule now that the Government have decided not to proceed on the legal point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with this important point. If there is any change with regard to the sub judice rule as a result of the written answer given today, that is a matter for consideration and a matter on which the hon. Gentleman can properly seek advice from the Chair. Obviously I cannot give an off-the-cuff reaction, but it is a perfectly fair point which will certainly be considered.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the job of the Speaker and his Deputies to protect Parliament. Every day when visitors are taken round the Houses of Parliament they are shown the portrait of Speaker Lenthall. I hear all the guides, no doubt with the authority of Mr. Speaker, saying, "This bloke says to the monarch, 'I am not your man. I am the House of Commons's man'." At the time of the Zircon affair Mr. Speaker himself had to accept a manuscript amendment from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to resolve the matter. On that occasion, Mr. Speaker, acting for Parliament and not for the Executive, decided to accept the manuscript amendment so that we could get on with the debate in a proper and orderly fashion. We have had a debate on the freedom of the press; it has gone on since 9.30 am. One would have thought that had not the Government been treating you, Sir, and the House of Commons with contempt, they would have sent one of their people here

to join in the debate and give us the information that they have sneaked through by means of a planted written question.

The truth is that so much power has gone to the Executive, the Government and the Prime Minister that they now treat not only Opposition Back Benchers but the whole House with contempt. It is high time that somebody in the Chair acted more like Speaker Lenthall instead of acting on behalf, it seems, of the Executive—a poodle. That is what it is coming to. It is high time that somebody showed some authority and stopped this business of allowing the Tory Government to trample over democracy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order I am prepared to assume that the hon. Gentleman is not attempting to criticise the Chair. I can only repeat to the House that we cannot debate the matter now. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, it is not a matter for the Chair. Hon. Members must find a suitable occasion on which to raise it at some other time.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is very unfair to the rest of the business of the House for hon. Gentlemen to raise further points that are not points of order. I shall call hon. Members who have been rising, but I ask them to ensure that they do not abuse the points of order procedure.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall try to be brief and not forget what you have said. The rights of the House and of Back Benchers have been abused. You, of course, are the custodian of those rights. It is right for hon. Members to voice their concern over the sneaky way in which this statement about there being no prosecutions has been made. This is a major decision, so may I——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has made his point. I cannot add to what I have already said. This is not a matter for the Chair, so the hon. Member must seek other ways of raising it. Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas.

Mr. Cohen: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not made my point——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the hon. Member's point. Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On a point of order on a further aspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, dealing with the involvement of Scottish Law Officers. I speak on behalf of my colleagues in the Scottish group who would wish to make the strongest possible representations to the Chair, the usual channels and the Government, about the way in which this decision, affecting civil liberties and the freedom of the BBC in Scotland, has been conveyed to the House. The House has been intimately involved through the initial ban on showing the film to Members of Parliament. This civil liberties matter is of deep concern to all of us. There is concern also outside the House about the role of not only the law authorities in the Home Office and the Attorney-General's Department, but of the Scottish Law Officers. It is appropriate in matters concerning the Scottish Office or the Welsh Office that the Ministers responsible for those Departments should be present in the House to hear points and respond. The fact that the Scottish Law Officers are not present is not satisfactory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that what has been said has been heard by the Government Front Bench, but I must repeat that it is not a matter for the Chair.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 2nd December, the Motions in the name of Sir Marcus Fox relating to Agriculture, Defence, Education, Science and Arts, Employment, Energy, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Social Services, Trade and Industry, Transport and Welsh Affairs may be proceeded with though opposed, for one and half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at that hour, any Amendments to the first such Motion which may have been selected by Mr. Speaker may then be moved, the Questions thereon shall be put forthwith, and Mr. Speaker shall then put successively the Question on the said Motion and any Questions necessary to dispose of the other such Motions, which may then be made and of any Amendments thereto which may have been selected by him and which may then be moved; and that, notwithstanding the practice of the House, each such Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 30th November, the Housing Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Twelve o'clock, and the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. John Garrett be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Marjorie Mowlam and Mr. Terry Davis be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

St. Thomas's Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.41 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The House should not adjourn until it has considered the important matter of the closure of wards at St. Thomas's hospital in my constituency. This has major implications for an outstanding teaching hospital, and the need for this matter to be addressed is urgent.

The people of Lambeth receive health care from at least three different health authorities — the West Lambeth health authority, Camberwell health authority and Wandsworth health authority. All have faced and continue to face considerable cuts in spending. All have taken or are taking drastic action to meet the cash limits that have been imposed on them by central Government. However, these cuts are not temporary or short term. They fit in with a clearly defined Government programme of moving money from London health authorities to the provinces, and the two hospitals in the front line of those cuts are King's College and especially St. Thomas's.

Over the past four years, the West Lambeth health authority has made more than £4 million in cuts, which means a 10 per cent. reduction in the number of available beds. Over the next seven years, the West Lambeth health authority will be forced to increase the cuts year by year, and at the end of seven years this will mean cuts of £7 million below current spending. As a result, the authority decided recently that there should be cuts of five acute wards at St. Thomas's hospital—a reduction of nearly 140 in the number of beds. The health authority estimates that, as a result, up to 2,500 people will not receive medical attention. It should be borne in mind that the majority of patients at St. Thomas's hospital are from outside the district.

Lambeth is one of the four most deprived boroughs in the London area, but the patients attending St. Thomas's hospital are coming from outside the area. The results also mean the closure of two community health clinics, the rationalisation of services in two others, the restructuring, as it is called, of the family planning services and reduced and delayed staff recruitment. Although the health authority would like these to be temporary closures, in fact these beds will not be opened again next year since, even with the beds closed, there will still be a shortfall of £1·1 million.

It is inevitable in these circumstances that there should be a reduction of service and patient care. The consequences are quite dire. The choice cannot be made between reductions in quality and volume of the service provided. It is essential that no further reductions should be made in the volume of service, given the considerable pressure on waiting lists.

The costs issue itself is straightforward. For example, the cuts that are being made are essentially on nursing staff. The bed use rate at the moment at St. Thomas's hospital is 98·5 per cent. It has never been higher. Previous bed use rates were lower, which enabled a margin for allowing acute admissions. In practice, reducing available beds by 20 per cent. is equivalent to telling an enterprise running at 98·5 per cent. of capacity that it should from now on run at 80 per cent. of capacity. That raises the unit cost of treating each of the remaining patients. By reducing variable costs, such as pay, one cannot reduce the constant or fixed costs of running a hospital of this size. Therefore, the cuts do not increase efficiency in patient service, even in economic terms. They actually reduce that efficiency.

Over the longer term, the issues facing the hospital and the region are very serious indeed. At the moment more than 2,000 people who are on the waiting list will not be treated in the coming year. That could grow to as high as 2,500. Surgeons at St. Thomas's hospital will in future be doing on average one non-emergency operation per week simply because there will not be sufficient beds for them to use. As a result, surgeons will not be able to train or teach a sufficient number of pupils to ensure that St. Thomas's hospital continues as a teaching hospital. The Nightingale school of nursing is now having to consider a reduction in the number of nurses for training because of ward closures. The indefinite postponement of normal surgery treatment, or cold surgery as it is known, clearly worsens patient care. I am sure that the Minister will be addressing these issues.

For example, an 83-year-old man should be able to receive normal treatment in the urology department at St. Thomas's hospital. The question of bladder retention is a common problem among the elderly. The normal treatment is a catheter to relieve the urine and then simple surgery to correct the condition of acute retention of the bladder is the practice. This man was referred by his general practitioner and had a catheter inserted. He was then sent home, to drip indefinitely. The urology department, with misgivings, has had no option, granted more ward closures and bed reductions. The result is that the patient is distressed, the department is distressed and the quality of patient care is suffering.

The resource allocation working party formula—the RAWP formula — was never intended to reduce allocation in one area and to expand it in other areas. The formula was introduced under a Labour Government to ensure a shift in net resources between regions.

I have made representations to Ministers on this matter. One of the problems with the Government's application of RAWP is precisely that it was based on a population or demographic assumption that the population of inner London would fall. But since 1983 the population in inner London has risen. Therefore, the assumption that was made on long-term expenditure planning for hospitals in inner London is wrong. I said at the time of the abolition of the strategic housing role of the Greater London council that the families that we used to move to outer London would not be moved. This is the heart of the problem. The 10-year regional plan for the London region as a whole assumed that there would be a 15 per cent. decline in hospital admissions in inner London, but the trend since 1983 has been a 2·5 per cent. increase, because the population in the region is increasing.

The reaction to the cuts and the pressure on the hospital by the consultants at St. Thomas's has been amazing. They have agreed to donate 5 per cent. of their pay as a short-term measure. But how effective can that be? I ask the Minister to address this question: will this money be considered additional to own resources raised or generated by the region, as is happening in so many hospitals with the selling of ancillary services such as laundries and car parks? The consultants want to know. Or will such cash

raised by or for the health authority simply be taken off its future health allocations? That concerns consultants at St. Thomas's and the West Lambeth health authority.

Frankly, health authorities can do no more. They are now operating at 98·5 per cent. bed occupancy. There are no more savings to be made on support or ancillary services. The cuts have hit the bone. If one takes an overview of the Health Service in the year X, as the Government have done in the past, it can be admitted that some savings could be made. However, if one succeeds with them, simply to cut, cut and cut again would be bad surgery; it is bad economics and it is potentially fatal for patients. The inevitable consequence of the situation at St. Thomas's is that some patients will die because they will not be able to get access to treatment in the hospital itself. The reality is that St. Thomas's has become an emergency hospital. Cold surgery has fallen to insignificant proportions.

Whereas five years ago there was no waiting list at St. Thomas's and doctors could admit patients whenever they wished, there are now more than 500 patients waiting for routine treatment. On average, those patients have been waiting for two years each, and between them they have been waiting for 1,000 years. None of them is likely to be admitted unless there is a drastic reversal of the cuts. The situation is serious and it is well expressed in a letter that I received from a nurse. I shall not cite the name of the nurse, nor was the letter solicited. I have never met her. She says that she is very concerned about the cuts. This is typical of much of the mail that I have received and the discussions that I have had with other nurses at St. Thomas's. She writes:

"I only see the anguished and anxious faces of patients who are told that they will have to go home a few days early because somebody else needs their bed. The psychological care of a patient is just as important as the physical care that a patient receives; by being sent home early"—

this relates to the reduction of turnover time of patients—

"by being sent home early, with perhaps a few worries and fears unanswered; these patients very often suffer a physical setback associated with their anxiety. All too often these patients have to return to hospital, maybe a week later because of this. In retrospect two admissions cost more money than it would have done to keep that patient in hospital for a few days more on his first admission."

I hope that the Minister will address this aspect of the number of patients treated. The Government count the number of patients treated as the number of admissions, even if they are readmissions. The rate of readmission, of course, has risen because of pressure on turnover time in bed occupancy.

The nurse continues:

"I find it hard to believe that recent cuts suggested in nurses' pay will aid this problem. To my mind it will only serve to worsen it. I am sure you are well aware of the number of nurses leaving the profession because the lack of money outweighs the rewarding nature of the job, and their devotion to it. All too long the Government has manipulated the nurses by playing on their consciences, and using their wish not to strike, as a basis for ignoring their pleas for help. We should be looking to sort this problem out in the future, and without nurses the Health Service will fail."

Moreover, without beds patients cannot be served and without further funding the future of St. Thomas's hospital and other major teaching hospitals in inner London will be at risk.

2.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): As this is my fourth appearance at the Dispatch Box this week, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) will understand if I do not greet his success in the ballot with my usual cheerful enthusiasm. Nevertheless, I am glad to have this opportunity to deal with the important topic that he has raised in relation to St. Thomas's hospital.

St. Thomas's is one of the country's leading teaching hospitals—perhaps the leading teaching hospital—with a history dating back to mediaeval times. Heavily bombed during the war, in the postwar period it has undertaken extensive rebuilding and expansion. As the new buildings have developed on the site, older and smaller buildings such as the Lambeth hospital, the Royal Waterloo hospital, the Grosvenor hospital, and so on, have been closed and their services moved to the St. Thomas's site. As a result, the work of St. Thomas's now comprises many regional and supraregional specialties. It is also a district general hospital for 170,000 people in the West Lambeth district health authority area and undertakes a great deal of bread and butter work which is also essential for teaching medical, nursing and other staff, including physiotherapists, operating department assistants, and so on.

Whatever difficulties are currently being experienced must be set against that background of growth, expansion and excellence. Any hon. Member would give their eye teeth to have a hospital of the quality of St. Thomas's in their constituency, and it is no insult to the excellent work of the Derbyshire royal infirmary when I say that it would be more than welcome in my area.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a loss of beds. He will acknowledge that that has been happening for a long time, including a period under the Labour Government. Ten years ago, at the peak of movement of services on to the St. Thomas's site, 1,100 beds were available and in use there. Slowly, as bed use has improved and with the growth in day cases, non-invasive techniques of investigation, diagnosis and treatment, many of which have been pioneered at St. Thomas's, the number of beds has fallen steadily to just under 900. Yet the number of patients treated has risen.

Ultimately, we are in business not to make beds but to care for patients. I shall give figures for two years. They have been recorded in exactly the same way, so there is no fudging. They are standard figures. In 1982, the number of in-patient cases treated was 32,800. Last year it was 35,800. The number of day cases in 1982 was 2,900. By last year these had increased nearly four times and leapt to 11,800. That must be the largest increase in day cases in the country. About 350,000 out-patient visits are made each year. That figure has not changed for some years, which perhaps casts a slightly different light on some of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I will go into the situation with regard to day cases in a little more detail. In trauma and orthopaedics, gynaecology and ophthalmology, the proportion of day cases is among the highest in the country. Indeed, for trauma and orthopaedics it is the highest in the country, with 58 per cent. of all cases done. That helps me give the lie to other districts that say that nothing like that can be done. The figure for gynaecology is 30 per cent., and for ophthalmology 28 per cent.

We look for similar progress in other specialties in the next few years. For example, the percentage of day cases in general surgery is less than 20, and the percentage in general medicine is only eight, which makes the hospital

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

one of the worst in the country. I can see no real reason why the kind of work — or the patient mix — that is being done should be so dramatically different. The turnover interval is good and, generally, the hospital is run extremely efficiently. Length of stay is, however, relatively long, even after standardisation of case mix. That is true across a variety of specialties including, for example, obstetrics, in which it is normal for women to stay for nearly a week, even for normal deliveries, which is now unusual in the rest of the country. That may be partly due to the need to develop community services further. From what I saw when I visited Mawbey Brough health centre in June of this year, the same high standards of buildings —that building cost £1·25 million—and of care offered are being set out in the community as are being established at St. Thomas's. It is noteworthy that a full service could not be offered at Mawbey Brough for the first 18 months because of considerable resistance from local GPs.

The hon. Gentleman will know of our determination, as set out in this week's White Paper, to improve the work done by GPs and other health professionals in the inner cities and elsewhere. We firmly anticipate that, if successful, that will take the pressure off the acute hospital sector and give better and more effective health care to our people.

Mr. Holland: Is the Minister saying that she hopes that community health care will reduce demand on the hospital? As regards what she has said about the day case rate going up, I believe that that has to do with pressure —because of lack of beds—to give day treatment rather than longer treatment.

Is the Minister aware that the lithotripter, used for dissolving kidney stones, which was introduced with such publicity at St. Thomas's and is a facility serving the nation, cannot be used at anything like its full capacity because the beds are not available, and people are coming from the midlands and being sent home because of that?

Mrs. Currie: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. That is exactly what we expect, because it will provide better and more cost-effective health care. The answer to the second part of his question is that day cases have developed because it is now possible to do them. The use of our facilities is optimised when people are cared for in the most appropriate way possible.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point about the lithotripter, but, as he knows, any new service attracts that sort of interest, and it is much harder for the provision of services to catch up. I know that the district general manager is aware of some of those difficulties.

Many of the patients do not come from the immediate locality. They come from Kent, Sussex, Surrey, south-west London and from anywhere that is accessible to Waterloo station — 500 yards walk away. Many of them suffer from the difficult conditions in which St. Thomas's specialises, but many do not. The conditions are routine, and one of the key elements of policy for many years under many Governments has been to try to ensure that such people can receive their services — including their hospital services—locally, so that they do not have to come into London to overburden hospitals here. An informed guess would suggest that 10 to 20 per cent. of the patients at St. Thomas's might well be treated at a hospital closer to home, with all the associated improvements that could result in follow-up. The White Paper will charge family practitioner committees in future with a more thorough examination of GPs' referral systems and referral rates, with a view to picking up those who perhaps refer too readily to the nearest hospital—or, in this case, to one of the more distant hospitals. They will also try to pick up GPs who do not refer enough. We hope for progress in that direction before too long.

St. Thomas's is popular with doctors and patients alike, not only because of the sheer quality of the care given but because staff have managed to create there a remarkable atmosphere which is at once friendly, good-natured and professional. That was my impression when I opened the emergency delivery suite there in May, and I was not in the least surprised when my nephew chose to go there to train as a doctor.

The present difficulties should be seen in this context. When the Labour Government started to review the allocation of financial resources — when the RAWP system was first set up 10 years ago by the noble Lord Ennals and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—it soon became apparent that London had lost 2·5 million people since the war, and it now houses a much smaller proportion of the British population than it used to. Nevertheless, London was still taking the lion's share of health spending. Since then, therefore, spending efforts have shifted deliberately from the south to the north and, within the south, from London to the home counties.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall mentioned a 10-year plan, developed in 1984, that postulated that London hospitals should lose 1,500 acute beds over the 10-year period and should instead build up the community services that have already been mentioned, and services to geriatrics, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. It should be remembered that many of those patients have to go a long way out of Lambeth, including as far as Darenth Park in Kent.

What has happened is that, in the three years since 1984, 1,100 acute beds in London have been lost. In fact, as Londoners tend to do, they have moved a lot faster on this than anyone expected. There has been a growth in other services as well. To be fair, this bed loss has sometimes simply entailed changing the label on the bed from acute to geriatric, often with the same patient in the bed. Nevertheless, inner London is still left with twice the number of acute beds for its population as the rest of the country and two and a half times the proportion for outer London — where the population of inner London has moved.

The district profile shows that West Lambeth health authority had a £73 million initial cash allocation in 1985-86 and £81 million for 1987-88. Those figures include the cash released from cost improvements such as tendering for hotel services, which is continuing; receipts from land sales on top are also expected and the district has some bright ideas for raising revenue, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Vauxhall.

My message to the consultants is go ahead. We shall ensure, especially as a result of today's discussion, that the regional health authority understands that it is our view that the consultants must have some incentives to proceed in the way that has been suggested. We intend to change

the law to make it easier for health authorities to practise income generation of the kind that they have been exploring.

The district has endeavoured to keep its spending, especially on agency nurses, under control. As a result, last year, it found it harder to recruit the specialised staff that it needs. Therefore, in the first six months of this financial year a determined recruitment drive was instituted, especially in Ireland. That drive brought in the staff. A review of the budget in September showed that, as a result, the DHA expected to be overspent by some £2·5 million by the end of the financial year. Next year the overspend could be about the same. The details and the actions taken have been rehearsed by the hon. Member for Vauxhall.

All our health authorities have the same statutory obligations not to overspend on budget. This morning I had the benefit of a long discussion with the district general manager of the West Lambeth health authority, Dr. Stephen Jenkins. He is a consultant and I greatly admire the approach that he and his colleagues are taking. I am sure that they are well apprised of the difficulties. They are using both old-fashioned management skills, such as looking at the performance indicators — the district general manager could reel them off quicker than I can—and a lot of modern imagination and initiative to help solve the problems. Some of the actions proposed will require action by Ministers. Indeed, the proposed disposal of the south London site, which has been empty for two years, is on Ministers' desks at present.

Mr. Holland: The Minister will appreciate that I have made strong representations to her about the south London site. I believe that that site should be available for medical or medical-related use, including people moving from Tooting Bec, and nurses' accommodation. Such accommodation is desperately important to the West Lambeth health authority. The figures that I gave regarding a waiting list of 1,000—500 patients for two years ahead—concerns only the neurology department at St. Thomas's. There was no waiting list five years ago. In her discussions, has the Minister been able to address the crisis situation that St. Thomas's now faces?

Mrs. Currie: I will not make a decision right now about the south London site, but we are close to making an announcement. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that we could go from one extreme to the other with the disposal of that site. We could use that site entirely for medical activity, which would involve substantial expansion and need new money. That would make the problems of West Lambeth health authority and St. Thomas's much worse. We could go entirely to the other extreme and dispose of it entirely. That would raise a large sum of money, but would lose the site for Health Service purposes. Perhaps we may find some highly acceptable compromise that will produce a substantial chunk of cash—it is an extremely valuable site—and at the same time help solve some of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I shall make an announcement shortly.

As I have said, at least some of the problems with the waiting lists — not all by any means — are partly attributable to the fact that some patients could well be treated somewhere else. Patients are, and continue to be, the responsibility of their own general practitioners. I recognise that that is not a problem that we can resolve overnight.

Some of the proposals that no doubt would assist St. Thomas's and the West Lambeth district health authority may well have to come to Ministers before long through the statutory procedure. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand if I cannot give any more details than that. Any permanent changes must go through the statutory consultation procedure first. We shall ensure that all the views expressed about the changes and possible future changes are taken into account and that decisions are taken with the interest of patients and local people very much at heart.

St. Thomas's has an outstanding past. It continues to provide an outstanding service to people in London and beyond. It will no doubt continue for centuries to come to dominate our physical view here at Westminster and also the medical world at large. I sincerely hope that its current problems are only temporary.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 30 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Airline Competition

1. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take further steps to increase competition between airlines on European routes out of Heathrow and Gatwick airports; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): Implementation of the European Community aviation liberalisation package is the most important step that we could take at this stage to increase competition in Europe. We shall be looking for its formal adoption at the Council of Ministers on 7 December. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I will be holding talks this Wednesday with the Spanish Foreign and Transport Ministers with the aim of reaching agreement about use of Gibraltar airport and ending Spanish opposition to adoption of the package.

Mr. Steen: Is it correct that my right hon. Friend is powerless to vary the undertakings given by British Airways to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which allow the commission to give the green light to the British Airways-British Caledonian deal? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the undertakings by British Airways are meaningless, have no force of law and cannot be enforced by him or by the courts? Does he accept that it will be a serious blow to competition in the airline industry if the merger goes ahead?

Mr. Channon: I assure my hon. Friend that what British Airways promised to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission can be enforced. The Civil Aviation Authority, my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have, in various ways, the power to make British Airways stick to the promises that it gave to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. As my hon. Friend knows, the Secretary of State decided—indeed, he had no alternative—to accept the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that a merger between British Airways and British Caledonian would not operate against the public interest. The Director General of Fair Trading has powers to investigate anti-competitive practices. In addition, I have already asked the CAA to investigate and report to me one year after the merger, if it goes ahead.

Mr. Steel: The Secretary of State must be aware of the growing concern among hon. Members of all parties, and especially among consumers outside the House, that the prospective merger between British Airways and British Caledonian would result in a 93 per cent. monopoly of British air traffic. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore, give an undertaking that he, on behalf of the Government, will do nothing to interpose in the commercial discussions that are currently taking place between British Airways and SAS, or Air Europe, and that the Government will give the talks a fair wind with a view to providing Britain with an effective second-force airline?

Mr. Channon: I have not been approached, except informally, by anyone regarding any other merger. I am anxious to encourage fair competition between British airlines and to ensure that they can compete aggressively against foreign carriers. Any link, whether between British Caledonian and British Airways, British Caledonian and SAS, or British Caledonian and anyone else, should be considered against those criteria.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a grievous handicap to the policy of creating greater competition between British airlines out of Heathrow and Gatwick is the lack of runway capacity at those airports? Is my right hon. Friend preparing to grasp that prickly nettle?

Mr. Channon: Not today, Sir. Indeed, that is largely a matter for the British Airports Authority and the CAA, at least in the initial stages. However, I am well aware of my hon. Friend's views.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the Secretary of State know that the wings of the airbus are made in my constituency at the famous Broughton factory and that British Caledonian has ordered the airbus? What would he say today to assure my constituents that their work, helping Britain to sell abroad, will continue?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman should take up that matter with British Caledonian, but I am well aware of those facts. At present, many commercial discussions are going on and I should not enter into them, no matter how persuasive the hon. Gentleman is.

Mr. Adley: In view of what my right hon. Friend said about talks between the British and Spanish Governments next week, will he bring to the attention of the Foreign Secretary that the view of millions of Europeans on the Gibraltar question will not be enhanced in favour of Gibraltarians if they refuse to allow the reasonable compromise that the British and Spanish Governments could reach in the general interests of passengers in Europe on low air fares?

Mr. Channon: I hope that on Wednesday a solution will be reached that is acceptable to all parties and that the package will be adopted on 7 December.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On the proposition that SAS and British Caledonian might come together, has the Secretary of State noticed Lord Young's statement that such a merger need not go to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Does he agree with that? Does he have any policy on the foreign ownership of British airlines? Is it not ironic that the Secretary of State seems now to rely on a 50 per cent. state-owned airline to rescue a British private company?

Mr. Channon: A reference to the MMC is entirely for my noble Friend. It has nothing to do with me. As normal, he will undoubtedly receive the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. It is the CAA's duty to advise me when a British airline is no longer United Kingdom-controlled. I cannot speculate on how I might or might not use powers to direct the revocation of British Caledonian's licences.

Bus Lanes

2. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to alleviate the traffic congestion in south-east London arising from bus lanes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We shall shortly be issuing new advice on the design and assessment of with-flow bus lanes. Well designed but lanes should not increase overall delays to traffic.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer, which is more positive than I expected. Does he agree that it makes little sense to halve the carriage width of our most important radial routes into London —an extreme example is the flyover on the Old Kent road where four lanes merge into one — particularly when motorists seem not to understand how to use bus lanes, treating them as no-go areas for 24 hours a day instead of the period for which they are intended?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. There is little dispute that most bus lanes work well. Some are under review and we are considering introducing more on trunk roads.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister agree that the way to ensure that traffic flows well through south-east London is to police bus lanes to ensure that they are not used for parking, which causes enormous congestion? Does he agree that the second way is to ensure that London Transport has sufficient resources to run regular, efficient bus and other transport services to reduce the massive volume of private traffic and heavy lorries which clog up main routes, such as the Old Kent road in my constituency? We need improved public transport, not more private transport.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman's constituency and the rest of London need economic prosperity, but it is difficult to achieve increased prosperity, more jobs and environmental relief without some money being spent on roads. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that trunk road capital expenditure in London this year is £85 million and underground capital expenditure £200 million. Most trunk road spending is on docklands and east London to help improve that area so that the rest of London does not benefit from all the economic prosperity.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that bus lanes are slowing commercial traffic and increasing prices substantially? Is he further aware of the former Labour-controlled GLC's ban on heavy lorries? Can he say what the ban has cost in terms of the number of notices issued and the number of lorries banned?

Mr. Bottomley: I can give the factual answer to that, without giving a judgment on the lorry ban. Two thousand signs were erected and 20,000 permits with 10 pages each, making 200,000 pages of permits, were issued. The cost was £250,000 and I think that the GLC told us that four lorries were banned.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Stick to the question please.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that, at the moment, bus lanes save London Transport about £7 million? Will he further confirm that if those lanes were properly policed they would save up to £48 million and that that would help considerably to lower fares, get the public on to buses, decrease congestion on London's roads and do something serious about the general state of congestion in London?

Mr. Bottomley: It is worth repeating that most of the bus lanes are not controversial. My right hon. Friend expects boroughs to give priority to public transport vehicles over other classes of traffic when that is justified on overall economic grounds. That should be acceptable to both sides of the House.

Motorway Lane Closures

3. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any estimate has been made of the additional journey time for motorists arising from delays resulting from lane closures on motorways in Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. We aim to keep delays to the minimum. Lane rental contracts saved 830 days of obstruction last year. The figure is two thirds higher than the year before.

Mrs. Golding: Is the Minister aware that the M6 motorway, which passes through my constituency, carries much more traffic than it was originally designed to carry? Is he further aware that that has resulted in high costs of repair and intolerable delays? Can he inform the House when a relief road will be provided for the over-burdened section of the M6 motorway?

Mr. Bottomley: No, I cannot. It is worth remembering that much of the obstruction on the motorways followed from an announcement made in 1975 by a former Minister for Transport, the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), who said:

> "I have decided to cut maintenance expenditure per mile on trunk roads and I urge local authorities to do the same." —[*Official Report*, 24 July 1975; Vol. 896, c. *318*.]

That announcement was followed by a 40 per cent. cut in maintenance and we are still trying to catch up.

Mr. Higgins: Has my hon. Friend noticed that delays are much worse when the closure involves the outside lane of a motorway rather than the inside lanes? That is so because anti-social characters rush along the outside lane and then there is delay while they try to cut in. Will my hon. Friend consider placing "no overtaking" signs ahead of signs that states that an outside lane is to be closed?

Mr. Bottomley: That is one of the issues that we are seriously considering. After tragic and often unnecessary crashes on the motorways, one of the things that I welcome is the increased publicity, especially by television, regarding those drivers who think that they are being clever by moving into the contraflow two or three vehicles ahead of those they would have followed if they had moved, as suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), into the inside lanes when advised by the notice.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Minister agree that there are also delays on the A19, particularly, but not exceptionally, in my constituency — [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not a motorway."] It is a motorway. Will the Minister also explain why the A19 is always under repair well before——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the A19 a motorway?

Mr. Robert Hughes: It should be.

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps I can look at that matter and write to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes).

Mr. Dickens: Is my right hon. Friend aware that each time a lane is closed on a motorway it costs industry, salesmen and directors millions of pounds because of lost meetings and the rest of it? When a decision is made to close a lane, does the road contruction unit make that decision, or the more local road maintenance unit? As so much money is involved and there is a loss to British industry, can we ensure that the ground rules are well in place before lanes are closed?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Civil Aviation Policy

4. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the British Airports Authority plc to discuss civil aviation policy.

Mr. Channon: On 17 June.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Secretary of State tell the House what he is proposing to do about the distribution of aviation activity in this country in the light of the severe congestion at airports in the London area and the worsening situation as regards near misses? In particular, will the right hon. Gentleman consider the problems that have arisen as a result of the opening of STOLport and the final 30 miles into or out of STOLport that are outside the terminal manoeuvring area and, therefore, outside the area in which direct assistance can be given by the air traffic controllers to pilots? Will he pay particular attention to the near misses that were reported in *The Observer* yesterday regarding planes flying into and out of STOLport?

Mr. Channon: I believe that that is a matter for the CAA. Nevertheless, I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's questions. As regards the question of congestion in general, the House is aware that major developments are already under way at Stansted. Next year a new terminal will open at Gatwick and a major refurbishment of terminal 3 at Heathrow is under way.

As regards STOLport and the allegations that have been made, that is something for which the CAA is directly responsible. It has a statutory responsibility for air safety in this country. I shall discuss what the hon. Gentleman said with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, but if it did not accept that the position at STOLport was satisfactory, it would not have allowed it to proceed.

Mr. McCrindle: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority, will he discuss with him the welcome agreement reached — I believe since his previous meeting with Sir Norman Payne — between Britain and the Scandinavian countries on access and capacity? Will he take the opportunity to express the hope that, building on that agreement, competition in air fares between Britain and those important European destinations will be enhanced?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely anxious, as is the whole House, to see a reduction in European air fares. Although my hon. Friend's first points are valid, I must say that so far there has not been much movement on reducing air fares in Scandinavia.

Rev. Martin Smyth: When the Secretary of State meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority, will he mention the concerns of those who travel on the Belfast-Heathrow route about the improved accommodation at Heathrow, which is still overcrowded? Will he try to discover whether a defect in the security vetting at Heathrow does not allow passengers diverted to Edinburgh to get of the plane and telephone those who are waiting for them at London to say that they will be delayed? What is the security problem that does not allow us, having been vetted at Heathrow, to make a telephone call in Edinburgh?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman makes some important points. I shall discuss them with the chairman and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that in 1976 there was one near-miss for every 18,700 take-offs and landings of commercial aircraft, and that last year there was one near-miss for every 70,600 take-offs and landings? Is it not four times safer to fly today than it was 10 years ago?

Mr. Channon: I would have to check my hon. Friend's figures, but there is no doubt that near-misses are decreasing. I should have made the point when the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) asked his supplementary question, because he — no doubt inadvertently — gave the misleading impression that near-misses were increasing, not decreasing.

Mr. Spearing: In respect of the Secretary of State's helpful reply about STOLport in my constituency, will he acknowledge that the risks apply not only to people in aircraft but to those who live in urban areas? When he meets the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, will he ask whether immediate steps can be taken to ameliorate the position, at least as presented in the newspaper reports? What can be done to expedite the plans already in hand, which will not be completed until the early 1990s? Can they be speeded up?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly take up that matter with the chairman, whom I shall meet soon. I know of the hon. Gentleman's helpful attitude to all these matters, some of which he may already have discussed with the authority. All aspects of aviation safety regulation are the statutory

responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, and I shall discuss with the chairman all the relevant points made today.

London Underground

5. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about conditions on the London Underground; and what communication he has had on this matter with London Regional Transport.

Mr. Channon: Until last week, a handful of letters from Members of this House and about 30 from the general public during the past three months. I meet the chairman of LRT at regular intervals, and quality of service is one of the subjects that we discuss.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Whatever the findings of the King's Cross inquiry on staffing levels, is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents and I travel late at night on the Central line with considerable apprehension in the absence of staff on duty? If LRT cannot afford it, could a Manpower Services Commission scheme provide extra staff to assist and protect passengers?

Mr. Channon: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. I know that portion of the Underground well. My hon. Friend knows that day-to-day operations are a matter for LRT, and it is for it to satisfy itself that its statutory duty is met. That duty requires LRT to operate safely, efficiently and with economy.

If the formal investigation reveals any deficiencies, they will naturally have to be attended to—and they will be. The whole issue of staffing levels will clearly engage the attention of those who are interested in this topic.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Secretary of State aware that many people in London are genuinely concerned about safety on the Underground network, not only because of the awful tragedy in King's Cross, but because of the general safety problems caused by overcrowding? When he meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, will he discuss with him the dangers of overcrowding on Underground trains during the rush hour and, very important, the availability of emergency services should an accident occur?

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that he should review his attitude to London Regional Transport and increase its grant to levels commensurate with those for other capital cities' public transport systems, rather than force London Regional Transport to run at close to danger levels because of its lack of resources?

Mr. Channon: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's last remarks. Investment in the London Underground has been increasing, and is programmed to increase, by substantial amounts—far higher amounts than a few years ago when the Underground was run by the GLC.

I well understand the concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman — and by his constituents, other hon. Members and the general public—about the general issue of safety. London Underground management teams, together with London Underground Ltd. fire prevention section, instituted a 100 per cent. check on the Underground system the day after the tragic fire. All stations, escalators, cross passages and machinery rooms have been checked, and anything needing urgent attention was dealt with on the spot. An action plan of less urgent matters is being drawn up. Obviously, this is a matter that is, rightly, very much in the mind of London Regional Transport, and it is one that I shall be continually discussing with it.

Mr. John Marshall: What proposals has my right hon. Friend received from London Regional Transport about the long over due improvement in the quality of service on the Northern line?

Mr. Channon: I have received a number of proposals from LRT, and the House may be interested to hear what the the board member for finance said at the weekend:

"We are not constrained by financing; the Government has approved every investment programme that we have put before it."

Investment in the Underground,which was running at £114 million a year—at today's prices—between 1970 and 1984, has risen to about £199 million this year, and will be more than £200 million in 1988-89. It is extremely important that the House should understand that an enormous amount of investment is going into the London Underground, and has been for the past few years, and I am determined to continue that.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Secretary of State place in the Library a copy of the recommendations arising from the Oxford street fire disaster, together with a check list showing which of them have been implemented?

As the formal part of the inquiry into King's Cross will not start until some time in January, as soon as the exact cause of that fire is known will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to make a statement to the House, so that people's understandable fears of using the Underground can be allayed as soon as possible?

Mr. Channon: Naturally, I should like to consider that. I am not at all sure yet that we know the cause, and it may take the inquiry to establish it. However, I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's comment in mind.

Naturally, the recommendations following the Oxford Circus station fire have all been followed up. Most of them have been fully implemented and, in a few cases, work is still in hand. A small number of recommendations were not adopted for technical reasons. A full report is being prepared. I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said and see whether there is some way in which I can make the information available to the satisfaction of all hon. Members.

Network SouthEast

6. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct the British Railways Board to respond to the proposal of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and make an estimate of the level of investment required to meet the quality of service recommemdations contained in the recent report on Network SouthEast.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): British Rail is investigating the level of investment needed to meet the MMC's recommendations.

Dr. Marek: Has the Minister read the MMC's recent report? If so, is he aware of the large gaps in quality of service targets and in information about details of standards achieved? Will he ask British Rail management to examine the problems of these detailed targets—and

do so himself — and obtain some better management efficiency so that the public know exactly what the standards are and how British Rail proposes to meet them?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing out that point, because I have been looking at the standards of quality achieved on Network SouthEast. Although I personally am never satisfied, it is the case that, in 1979, 84 per cent. of trains arrived within five minutes of their scheduled time. By March 1986 the figure had gone up to 87 per cent., and in October this year it had reached 93 per cent. Sometimes, knocking British Rail should give way to giving credit to the staff for a magnificent job, which is done often in very adverse conditions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Could investment projects in the south-east be affected by the massive guarantees of income to Eurotunnel by British Rail, despite the previous written instructions not to give any such guarantee? Who will pay if the project is the dismal flop that the investing public obviously think it will be? Will it be other rail travellers, or the taxpayers? Does my hon. Friend not have an obligation to the House to make a statement on the consequences of the dismal failure of the Eurotunnel share issue?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend well knows that the Government are not involved in the financing of Eurotunnel. The arrangements that British Rail has made are purely commercial, to enable it to have secure certainty of use of the tunnel. It is making payments for that, and for no other purpose.

Fares

7. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about fare levels on public transport systems.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since London Regional Transport announced its new fare levels from January 1988, my right hon. Friend has received no representations on the matter.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that the imposition of VAT on public transport fares will lead to higher fares for the consumer, to fewer passengers using public transport, and, ultimately, to greater congestion, particularly in the south-east? Is the Secretary of State still fighting in the Cabinet against VAT on public transport fares, or has it been agreed that transport will be given up to ratify the promises that the Prime Minister gave during the election as a deal for our European partners?

Mr. Mitchell: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, as I think he will know, that VAT is entirely a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that it would be improper for other Ministers to comment on that matter.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the level of fares in air transport is dependent upon efficient airports? What plans does he have for the future? Does he recognise that there is a real need to merge Manchester and Liverpool airports under one company, North-Western Airports plc, and privatise it?

Mr. Mitchell: With great respect to my hon. Friend, I do not think that that supplementary arises on this question.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How would fare levels — which are based on route capacity on any air routeing — from Carlisle to STOLport be influenced by the developments over the past few days, when civil airline pilots have been surfacing to make statements about standards of air safety in east London? Will the Minister set up an inquiry and interview each of the pilots who has made a statement, but not a public statement, saying that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question was legitimate, but the question is about transport systems, not air safety.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The question is about public transport systems.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Exactly. We are talking about the Carlisle-STOLport potential routeing. May we have an inquiry into the statements that have been made by civil airlines pilots, which have not been drawn to the attention of the Department, and which the Civil Aviation Authority chooses to ignore?

Mr. Speaker: That matter does not arise on this question.

Mr. Hayes: My constituents do not object to paying more if they get a more efficient and better service. Is my hon. Friend aware that the 17.22 from Liverpool street to Harlow has never, ever, in its whole history, been on time? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is about time that that whole shambolic service was put into private hands?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry to hear about the difficulties that my hon. Friend has with the train service. I shall draw his comments to the attention of the chairman of British Rail. In fairness, my hon. Friend ought to recognise that over much of Network SouthEast a substantial investment is in the pipeline, and until that investment comes through the improvements that we are seeking cannot be achieved. Ministers are wholly behind commuters in wanting to improve standards. That is why we have been so generous in improving investment.

Weighbridges

8. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many weighbridges are sited at United Kingdom ports.

Mr. Channon: The Department has provided slow-speed axle weighers at 11 of the major roll-on/roll-off ferry ports.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to the Minister for that useful information, but is he aware that many lorries entering the United Kingdom through ports are overloaded, and can he give a guarantee that, with the introduction of cabotage in 1992, the situation will not get substantially worse?

Mr. Channon: This year we expect to weigh about 8,800 foreign lorries, which is over 50 per cent. more than last year. I accept the need to step up the level of weighing. If cabotage is to come in—I do not go quite as far as the hon. Member—I am determined to ensure that the rules are fair to the British as well as to everybody else.

Mr. Ward: Is my right hon. Friend aware that ports such as Poole, which operate weighing apparatus, are at a commercial disadvantage compared with those that do

not have weighing apparatus because there is a tendency for drivers who know that they are overweight to avoid such ports? Is not the solution to have compulsory weighing of every vehicle entering the United Kingdom through a port?

Mr. Channon: We certainly must move to weigh more lorries, to have better enforcement procedures and to provide more weighbridges. I understand the feelings of my hon. Friend's constituents about the disadvantage at which their port may be put when compared with others. We shall attempt to have more weighbridges than we have now.

BR (Pacer Units)

9. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the implications for the overall performance of British Rail of the operational record of the pacer units.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, Sir. Problems with the performance of rolling stock are operational matters for British Rail.

Mr. Pike: While what the Minister said may be true, should he not be concerned that at times some 50 per cent. of the pacer units have been out of action on the east Lancashire line, and will this not have implications for British Rail if it is not rectified?

Mr. Mitchell: Of course I am concerned about this. It is a management matter for British Rail, which is tackling the matter. The principal cause of the problem is the gearboxes and British Rail is taking urgent action to deal with it, while seeking longer-term solutions.

Overloaded Vehicles

11. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has information as to the proportion of overloaded vehicles which are stopped at their point of entry into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We target checking on vehicles likely to be overloaded.

Last year about 24 per cent. of foreign vehicles checked were dealt with for overloading. The statistics do not distinguish between foreign vehicles checked at the ports and those checked inland.

Mr. Flynn: Is it not important to check a larger proportion of vehicles, as a large percentage of vehicles are overloaded? We know the damage that those vehicles cause to our roads. The important test is not the total weight, but the weight on each axle. If there is overloading, or uncontrolled loading, the damage to our roads is very costly. Is there not an unanswerable case, which was not answered in the previous question, for increasing the surveillance of overloaded foreign lorries?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is correct. He will be glad to hear that we aim to weigh 50 per cent. more foreign lorries this year.

Mr. Page: As one in four continental lorries are overweight when tested, when will my hon. Friend take steps to ensure that the weighbridge at Dover, which has been out of action for two years, is brought into use?

Mr. Bottomley: As soon as I can, but I think my hon. Friend will accept that a high proportion of the lorries checked are overloaded, because the staff check more overloaded lorries than empty lorries.

Disabled People

12. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve transport provision for people with disabilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport is working closely with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, transport providers and local authorities on a continuing programme of initiatives to improve transport for people with disabilities through research, information, promotion and education.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister satisfied that facilities for the disabled are now correct on all deregulated routes? In other words, are the deregulated routes providing what we need?

Mr. Bottomley: I am not satisfied, and that is why I spent Saturday with Sir Harry Secombe in Swansea launching a bus that had been converted at reasonably low cost to provide substantial additional benefits for the frail, the disabled and the elderly. The hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that I was offered the part of second tenor in the Gwalia choir after we sang "We'll keep a welcome in the hillsides".

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Court

64. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Attorney-General whether the Lord Chancellor has any plans to introduce a family court.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The idea of a family court embraces a number of concepts which are under study by the Lord Chancellor. The object is to improve the effective workings of the courts in the handling of family matters.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, with 160,000 divorces a year, involving 70,000 children, it is time to move on from our outdated and incoherent family court structures? Too often proceedings in court emphasise the adversarial aspects and exacerbate the difficulties of those involved. Clearly, it is time to put an end to drift and delay and to make a decision to move towards a coherent, integrated family court structure.

The Solicitor-General: I have much sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. The opportunities for conciliation and reconciliation are among the aspects being studied, and the Government are anxious to improve the handling of all family business — especially cases concerning children.

Mr. Corbett: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the time has come for more than sympathy? I was told in a written answer that for about £300 million we could make this system much better, in the interests of those who get involved in these difficult and emotionally charged situations. Will he give the House some sort of timetable and a clear commitment that this will be done?

The Solicitor-General: The matter is under very active consideration by the Lord Chancellor. The hon.

Gentleman mentioned a figure that his own Government when in office regarded as wholly unrealistic. We are getting ahead and studying the position in the hope of coming forward fairly early with an answer.

Mr. Sims: Will my hon. and learned Friend take into account the representations made by a wide range of bodies that support the idea of family courts? The representations included those from some who combined to form the family courts campaign. These bodies went to a lot of trouble to respond to the consultation document, since when nothing seems to have happened. When will we get some action?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend points out that a number of bodies have made representations. They made a very diverse range of representations. The concept of the family court covers all those good ideas. It is for the Lord Chancellor, in company with colleagues, to decide which ideas to choose.

Prosecutors (Guidelines)

65. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Atorney-General if he has any plans to change the guidelines to prosecutors arising from his experience in the Spycatcher case.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No, Sir.

Mr. Allen: In view of the allegations in the book "Spycatcher" that the security services sought to undermine the democratically elected Government of this country, and as the book is still being pursued through the courts by the Attorney-General, will he now change his mind and allow the book to be published without further hindrance? Will he further investigate by public inquiry the security services, which are meant to defend our democracy and not to undermine it?

The Attorney-General: No. The principle underlying the Government's litigation here and elsewhere is very well understood in Britain. It is that those who have served in the security services owe a lifelong duty of confidentiality to the Crown. That must be maintained, and that is why the Government are bringing this litigation.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is not one of the lessons to be learnt from the "Spycatcher" cases the need to revise the conditions of service of members of MI5 in order to emphasise to them that the duty of confidentiality is a lifelong duty and to discourage them from any thought that they might be serving the public interest by breaching that duty?

The Attorney-General: I note what my hon. Friend said about the importance of conditions of service, and I shall see that that point is brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, it is well understood that this duty of confidentiality is lifelong and that this is absolutely inherent in the obligations of those who serve the Crown in that service.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not agree that decisions such as those made in the "Spycatcher" case in Australia have damaged the very principle of confidentiality that he seeks to establish? Does he further agree that his decisions and those of his predecessor in the "Spycatcher" case have made the British common law system the laughing stock of the common law world?

The Attorney-General: I am suspicious of those who claim to know what has made and what may not make something the laughing stock of something else. However, it is perfectly clear that the British Government have made abundantly plain throughout the world the importance that they attach to the obligation that I described. As the matter is still under appeal in Australia, I will not, I am afraid, yield to the temptation to comment on the remainder of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question.

Mr. Aitken: We all agree with the Government's tactics — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry; that was a slip of the tongue. We all agree with the Government's principle, but my hon. and learned Friend makes it sound as though the tactics are perfect. If my right hon. and learned Friend is interested in avoiding a repetition of the expensive grand opera of legal folly that has characterised the "Spycatcher" case so far, does he agree that the time has come to issue new guidelines, not just to humble prosecutors, as was suggested in the question, but to future Treasury Solicitors, Law Officers, Cabinet Secretaries and perhaps even higher personages? Perhaps the guidelines should be published in a book, then banned and turned into a best seller, but we certainly need a change.

The Attorney-General: The line between tactics and strategy is notoriously difficult to define. Perhaps my hon. Friend will recall what I told the House three weeks ago. With regard to section 2, which remains in force, work has been in hand for some time on devising provisions which would be an effective, enforceable and reasonable alternative. That task is not without difficulty. My hon. Friend knows that in 1979 the Government introduced their Protection of Official Information Bill. That was found to be unacceptable, but work is in hand.

Mr. Fraser: If there has been a serious impropriety in the Government service, or even a serious breach of constitutional principles, at what point is a civil servant entitled to stop biting his lip and blow the whistle without fear of prosecution?

The Attorney-General: It is well understood that there are procedures within the Civil Service for drawing attention to perceived improprieties. Each case turns upon its own circumstances, as the hon. Gentleman will be the first to recognise. That must be the only general answer capable of being given to a general question.

Director of Public Prosecutions

66. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions; and what subjects were discussed.

The Attorney-General: I last met the director on Monday 23 November. We discussed matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Janner: Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman discuss that evil and offensive emanation known as "Holocaust News"? Does he know of the alleged decision not to prosecute those who have perpetrated it? Will he repeat the undertaking given to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and myself by his hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General, namely, that if we produce counsel's opinion to say that the case of "Holocaust News" is covered by the Public Order Act, he and his colleagues will reconsider their previous view,

stated in a written answer last week that this publication is a lawful expression of opinion? If it is a lawful expression of opinion—which I venture to doubt—surely the law is an ass and an idiot.

The Attorney-General: I agree with the adjectives that the hon. and learned Gentleman applies to the publication. I am also aware of the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to institute criminal proceedings under the Public Order Act. I happen to agree with that decision because I do not believe that the fact that the publication is evil and offensive meets the test that part III of that Act lays down for an offence. Of course, if counsel's opinion is produced to me or the Director of Public Prosecutions we shall view it with an open mind, but I must emphasise that prosecuting decisions under the Act ultimately rest with me.

Mr. Gow: Has my right hon. and learned Friend explained to the director the very grave disquiet on both sides of the House about what appeared to be defective formalities in the issue of extradition warrants for those living in the Republic who are required for trial in this country? Will my right hon. and learned Friend give us an assurance that all that can be done to ensure that the formalities are in order will be done?

The Attorney-General: The answer is yes to the last part of the question. A detailed review of the arrangements was set in hand by my predecessor for the formulation of warrants for sending down to the South. In the recent case of Kane, it is only fair to point out that it was 10 o'clock in the morning on the relevant day last week when the Crown solicitor was first informed that Kane had been arrested in the South. It was 11.45 in the morning when he was told that he had until 1 o'clock in the afternoon to issue a warrant. If that matter has prompted my hon. Friend's question, it is only fair that that should be made clear. Incidentally, there has been no criticism of the warrant received by the Garda in that case.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

73. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to increase the level of British assistance to Bangladesh.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): During my recent visit to Bangladesh I announced a major new commitment of commodity aid, and also further commitments of food aid and flood rehabilitation assistance. Overall, our aid expenditure to Bangladesh this year is expected to exceed last year's level.

Mr. Hayward: On my hon. Friend's answer in relation to flood rehabilitation, will he say how much of the increased aid is likely to go towards providing improved housing in Bangladesh, which has been severely damaged by the floods?

Mr. Patten: Some of the extra assistance that we have provided will, I hope, go towards low-cost housing schemes through non-governmental organisations. I should like to see more projects suggested by NGOs in that area, which we could assist through our joint funding scheme. I believe that the Government of Bangladesh would welcome that as well.

Mr. Shore: I welcome the Minister's announcement on further aid for Bangladesh. However, is he satisfied that in that tormented country the funds and other commodity aid that he mentioned are reaching the people who really need it and are not being diverted by the military for partisan political ends?

Mr. Patten: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's concern. I am satisfied that our aid programme is providing effective help to the poor people in Bangladesh, who deserve every bit of assistance that we can provide for them.

Sub-Saharan Africa

74. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any new initiatives are planned by the European Community to assist the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: The European Community Development Council on 9 November agreed on new measures to aid poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are both heavily indebted and pursuing policies that will allow the aid to be effective. These include a new £70 million programme of grants to finance vital imports; and the faster, better targeted, use of existing funds.

Mr. Bowis: I welcome the statement made on behalf of the European Community Development Council and its action and, more important, the people of sub-Saharan Africa will welcome it. Is there more that can be done to build on the debt initiative of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to support the World Bank in providing its support for the peoples of that part of Africa?

Mr. Patten: We want to see further progress made towards implementing the whole of the Chancellor's debt initiative. As my hon. Friend will doubtless know, there is a meeting later this week in Paris called by the World Bank to consider the co-financing of structural adjustment programmes in Africa. We shall be represented at that meeting and I expect us to make a substantial new pledge of assistance.

Mr. Butler: Why are the European taxpayer and the United Kingdom taxpayer shelling out money to Marxist regimes dedicated to the overthrow of the system that is funding them in this way?

Mr. Patten: I should like to make a distinction between humanitarian assistance, to which one should not tie any conditions, and long-term development assistance. On the latter, I remain determined that we should help effective policies and not ineffective ones.

Ethiopia

75. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what emergency appeals Her Majesty's Government have received from United Nations agencies in response to the current drought and risk of famine in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 13 November an emergency appeal was issued by the office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator for assistance with an emergency food airlift in Ethiopia. On 17 November I announced in response that Britain would provide £2

million to help support the airlift, with any unspent balance to be used for other urgent famine needs. An appeal for emergency relief supplies has also been issued by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Mr. Barron: Will the Government respond positively to the appeal by the United Nations Children's Fund in view of the fact that the aim is not just to provide food but is primarily to give assistance and care to the malnourished children in Ethiopia? What will be the Government's response to that important appeal?

Mr. Patten: We shall consider in due course our response to that appeal and to another appeal that is being made this week. So far we have provided over £23 million this year in assistance towards Ethiopia. We have been in the van of efforts by the donor community to help that poor country.

Mr. Baldry: Since Tigrean rebels are holding up relief convoys and the Ethiopian Government are spending 75 per cent. of the nation's wealth on prosecuting civil wars, is it not time that the international community, in the shape of the General Assembly of the United Nations, started to apply pressure on Ethiopia to resolve its internal armed disputes and to negotiate with the various rebel groups? Unless less is spent on arms, more will not be able to be spent on food.

Mr. Patten: There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend has said. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has appealed to the Ethiopian Government and, more particularly, to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front to try to ensure the free movement of food within Ethiopia. I think, without sounding complacent, that the House should know that the problem does not appear to be that of moving food to Ethiopia; it is that of moving food around within Ethiopia. Although the airlift, which has started, will be of considerable assistance, it is vital that trucks should be able to move around the country and that more trucks are moved from the south to the north to help.

Miss Lestor: I acknowledge the Government's contribution to the relief of some of the problems in Ethiopia. In relation to the UNICEF appeal, does the Minister agree that time is of the essence and that the children who are dying for want of food, water, and so on, cannot wait long? Will he consider the importance of this appeal as a matter of urgency? I acknowledge that there is a great problem in Ethiopia over the internal movement of any supplies that the Hercules or other aeroplanes might fly to that country. Bearing in mind the problems, has the hon. Gentleman considered repeating the 1985 Bushel operation, which was welcomed by many people in this country and abroad and which made such a big contribution in reaching the distressed areas within a short period?

Mr. Patten: It is precisely because of our concern for the starving in Ethiopia that we have committed, so far, £23 million this year for humanitarian purposes. Perhaps I can explain the exact position on the airlifts. The International Committee of the Red Cross airlift began today with the Hercules. The Caritas airlift should begin with the arrival of the Hercules on Wednesday in Addis Ababa, and a further Hercules a week or 10 days later. The United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation airlift will start as soon as the Ethiopian Government give permission to the United Nations to use another Hercules. The United Nations co-ordinator on the spot believes that four Hercules, and perhaps a fifth in January, should be sufficient. But, of course, the situation is being kept under review. We are in daily contact with the United Nations in Addis Ababa and, if we are requested to provide assistance with the Royal Air Force, we shall consider that as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that his announcement will be warmly welcomed by my constituents, many of whom have written to me requesting that the RAF be used to provide the sort of valiant help that it did two years ago?

Mr. Patten: I want to ensure that we provide the help that is both asked for and required. I do not think that we should bypass the efforts of the United Nations co-ordinator and the ICRC on the spot. I am sure that the whole House would wish to urge both the Ethopian Government and the EPLF to do everything in their power to ensure that the food gets through to the people who are starving.

Emergency Relief

76. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision for emergency relief is planned in the aid budget for 1988.

Mr. Chris Patten: Provision will be sought for disaster relief and food aid in the 1988-89 Supply Estimates.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister accept that, apart from the importance of increasing the figure — which has decreased since 1985-86—he should take on board the views of the Select Committee, which strongly recommended that global development funds should not be raided, as the Committee put it? In other words, the world's poor should not be asked to feed the world's poor.

Mr. Patten: The Select Committee is wise, but not perfect. We can help with disaster relief either from the general contingency reserve or, as we do currently, from within our contingency reserve. I think that the latter gives us more flexibility to operate as we are now doing and as our predecessors did.

Rate Support Grant (England)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the rate support grant report for 1988-89, which I have today laid before the House.

I announced to the House in July my proposals for the aggregates of local authority expenditure and grant for 1988-89. Subsequently, in October, I issued a consultation paper to local government containing details of all my proposals for next year's rate support grant settlement. The main elements of those proposals were that local authority current expenditure provision should be set at £27·538 billion, a 7 per cent. increase on the amount provided for 1987-88, allowing non-rate capped authorities to hold their spending broadly steady in real terms; that there should once again be a margin between the total of grant-related expenditure and expenditure provision to reflect my view that authorities continue to spend more than they need; that aggregate exchequer grant should be £13·775 billion, a cash increase of £750 million or 5·75 per cent. on 1987-88, holding grant at 46·2 per cent. of relevant expenditure; that there should be no major changes in the mechanisms of grant distribution and only limited changes to the methology for assessing needs; and, finally, that there should be a safety net equivalent to 5p at ratepayer level to prevent certain year-on-year grant losses and a cap of 10p at authority level to limit grant gains.

I have received comments on my proposals from the local authority associations and about 175 local authorities. There has been a widespread welcome for the stability proposed in the mechanisms for distributing grant and the methodology for calculating grant-related expenditure. Inevitably, I did not please everybody. There has been criticism of some aspects, especially the provision for expenditure, and of the effect of the proposals on certain authorities.

I have considered all the comments very carefully, and believe that my proposals strike the right balance, subject to some minor changes of data. Accordingly, I have laid the report today.

Within the existing rate support grant system, I believe that the settlement provides realistically for expenditure while making it clear that the Government are not prepared to underwrite high spending and high wage increases. It includes a generous cash increase in the taxpayer's contribution to the running of local services. As I have already indicated, it maintains as much stability as possible in this, the penultimate year of the present system.

In reaching my decisions, I have had especially in mind the effect of my proposals for ratepayers. The settlement means that rate bills need, on average, to increase by no more than the rate of inflation, but I must stress that there can be significant variations around the average. Clearly, the actual level of rates will depend on the budgets of each individual local authority. I hope, however, that authorities will take advantage of the many opportunities open to them to increase efficiency and make savings so as to keep rates down.

I will be making a separate announcement on rate limits and on the expenditure levels of those authorities that have sought redetermination next month.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): May I first apologise, on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), for his absence today, due to an accident.

We welcome the Secretary of State's statement. Its brevity belies the damage that this statement and its predecessors have done to local government finances. I want first to ask the Secretary of State if it is a correct assumption that for local authorities to maintain the current level of services in the next financial year they would have to find another £1·4 billion but that, if they did so, the Government grant would be reduced by no less than £600 million. Is this not the Government again forcing up rates as they have managed to do for the average ratepayer in England to the tune of £4·91 a week, compared with 1978-79, as a result of Government changes in various grants? Of course, the Secretary of State has to accept that the rate bills do not solely depend upon the spending decisions of local authorities.

The Secretary of State said that he had struck the right balance and that his statement gave stability, but that is after years of damage to the financial structure of local government. It is all very well for him to say that we are going to be stable now; he should instead be starting to undo some of the damage.

Regarding the distribution of rate support grant in respect of the so-called safety nets and the caps, will the local authorities which are losing and gaining do so on the same basis? The money figures are not the same, and it is not clear from the Secretary of State's statement whether the same formula is used for the safety net as for the grant losses. Are they treated on the same basis for both losing and gaining?

What has the Secretary of State allowed in the 1988-89 figures for the poll tax start-up costs? This is a matter on which he has received representations from both my hon. Friends in local government and his hon. Friends in the Conversative party.

Given that from April 1988 there will no longer be 100 per cent. rate rebates and that even the very poorest people, those on the means test, will pay 20 per cent. of the rates, where is the promised income support?

Is any money allowed in this 1988-89 settlement for the consequences of the storm damage on 15-16 October? It is quite clear that in 1987-88 the Treasury will make a profit on that storm damage and its financial consequences to local government. Is there anything set aside for next year?

As the Secretary of State will be making another statement, I will not go into his last point, rate capping, as that is probably inappropriate today. But given that he has promised another statement, could he see whether in it he will, after today's settlement, say why he cannot state the ground rules for rate capping before budgets are set in early 1988 for the year 1989-90? It is quite clear that, if this is the penultimate year, before they set their budgets the local authorities ought to know the ground rules for rate capping rather than being presented with changes in the rules towards the end of the year.

The Secretary of State said in July that the new system would be easier to understand, but will he confirm that, even if the poll tax comes into force on the date and in the form planned, there will still be all the trappings of the rates system—safety nets, grant-related expenditure, poll

tax capping, and so on — and that all the evidence suggests that the new system will be just as complex as the present one?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that the whole House wishes the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) a full and speedy recovery. Meanwhile, we are delighted to see the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) taking his place.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr asked whether the settlement would allow local authorities to finance the same level of services. The provision at settlement is 7·1 per cent. higher than last year and the grant is 5·8 per cent. higher than last year's gross grant. We do not yet know what the loss of grant will be, but the current estimate is £265 million. Taking that aspect out of the equation, both increases are very generous and should enable local authorities to maintain current levels. Indeed, I fear that it will allow them to increase the levels slightly, as the increases are well above the rate of inflation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Fear?"]

The hon. Member returned to a false point about the effect on local authority finances of the changes that the Government have made in the eight years since we came to office. Under the last labour settlement, for 1979-80, the AEG cash grant was £8,101 million. Uprated to 1988-89 prices, that would be £14,691 million, compared with the grant that I am providing of £13,775 million. That represents a cut of £916 million, which is not the figure usually bandied about by the Opposition. I am happy to have the opportunity to put the true figure on record.

In relation to nets and caps, I said in my statement that the safety net would be equivalent to 5p at ratepayer level and the cap to 10p at authority level. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point. The increase in provision and grant includes sufficient to cover any costs that may be incurred in starting to compile the community charge register next year. Income support is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, who I believe has already suggested levels by which income support will be increased to cover the 20 per cent. share of rate bills that people will be asked to find.

With regard to storm damage, we still have not had information from local authorities as to the costs that they might wish to capitalise and for which they would seek additional capital allocations. Until I have that information, it is impossible to estimate what the effects will be. It is, of course, always possible to adjust for these matters in the rate support grant if that is what we decide to do, but without the figures it is clearly hopeless.

As for rate capping, I simply abide by the statute, which sets me the task of setting out criteria for each year. In passing, I think that the hon. Member for Perry Barr would acknowledge that, if I set out the criteria in advance, there would be a marvellous opportunity for people to find ways of getting round them. That is not the purpose of the operation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there will be a debate on this later. We have a heavy day before us. I will allow questions to continue until 4.15 pm, but then we must move on.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): It would appear that, after making due allowance for the arcane complexities of rate support grant and accounting, which my right hon. Friend understands far better than most, he has announced an increase of money in real terms and, possibly, as a percentage of GNP. Therefore, how does he propose to deal with what will undoubtedly be a furtherance of the sedulously cultivated myth that that represents a cut in public expenditure?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am bedinning to learn what a "cut" means in Labour language. It means that if one asks for expenditure on a programme to be doubled and it is increased by only 50 per cent., that is regarded as a cut of 50 per cent.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is it correct that there is a difference of 3 per cent. between the grant-related expenditure assessment figure for shire counties and their expenditure assumption, which was the point that they made to the Secretary of State by letter following a meeting with the Minister for Local Government and that there will therefore be a shortfall of about £2 billion to keep services at a standstill? Most importantly, is it correct that there has still not been a change in the GREA for calculating the needs of the homeless and that the Secretary of State's slip of the tongue in referring to "mythology" rather than "methodology", is the appropriate description because councils will not have the money to cater for the rising tide of homeless people who present themselves, under the law, at their doors?

Mr. Ridley: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the unallocated margin as between GREs and the total at settlement. That does not mean that the money is not forthcoming, but simply that it is not allocated to any particular service. It slightly affects the distribution between different classes of authority. At the request of the associations, we have made the minimum changes to GREAs that are acceptable, and that has been welcomed by the associations.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement that he is not prepared to underwrite high spending will be warmly welcomed by Conservative Members? Is he also aware that several authorities that have been rate-capped have not appealed against his limits, but have made it clear that they will not reduce their expenditure to the level that he suggested? Does not that imply that there are still some loopholes by which such authorities can evade the controls, by borrowing and building up further debts? Does my right hon. Friend have any plans to try to block such loopholes?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is right to say that the settlement should discourage high spending. In fact, only two of the authorities that I originally suggested for rate limitation have applied for redetermination. As I have said, we shall announce our decision on that before Christmas. However, I have no evidence that the authorities that are subject to rate limitation are planning to get round that by spending up through other forms of raising money — whatever they may be. From the newspapers, which are my main source of information on what various authorities are doing, the impression seems to be that such authorities realise that the "party is over", if I may coin a phrase.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the Secretary of State aware of the effect of rate capping on boroughs that will

[Mr. John Fraser]

not apply, for good reasons, for redetermination? Is he aware that the growth of homelessness and child abuse, and the velocity of claims for housing benefit mean that some local authorities, such as Lambeth, find it difficult to keep services going? Despite the fact that no application has been made for redetermination, will the Secretary of State consider the real problems of such boroughs, with a view to lessening the controls that at present he intends to place on them?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, but what is curious about this is that some authorities with problems quite as great as the ones to which the hon. Gentleman has referred seem able to manage to provide a good service and to cope well, but with much lower expenditure. As well as the factors that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, there is clearly, therefore, the factor of inefficiency. At this stage, it would be wrong for me to pre-empt my statement on rate limitation, about which I shall make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is great concern in the London borough of Havering because the draft figures show that the cash settlement for 1988-89 would be no higher than that for the current year? Given that Havering has been a low-spending borough for many years, will my right hon. Friend explain, unless the figures have now changed, how we are expected to meet the inevitable increase in staff costs?

Mr. Ridley: In previous incarnations, my hon. Friend has been too close to the Department of the Environment not to know that the rate support grant formula operates on the basis of rateable values and needs as expressed through GREAs. The result of applying those formulae, which I must do by law, is that, under the settlement assumptions, the London borough of Havering has precious little change in the amount of grant which it receives. Some authorities are much less fortunate in that they lose grant because of the operation of the high rateable value element of the formula. I look forward to joining my hon. Friend in the Aye Lobby when the time comes to sweep away this silly system and to return to a much more sensible system based on the community charge. I am sure that we shall rejoice.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Could the Minister please clarify and reconsider his position on grant-capped authorities? Now only five authorities are grant-capped, one of which is Cleveland county council. That places it in a difficult position, because it means that next year there will be an additional £3·4 million on the rates although the authority is already in receipt of inner-area funding and urban-programme funding and has a large percentage of unemployed people. That strikes us as irrational, and we should like the Minister to clarify it.

Mr. Ridley: If Cleveland spends at the settlement assumptions, its grant will be increased from £91 million to £111 million, which is an increase of nearly £20 million. It will be enabled to keep its rates to an increase of about 1·4 per cent., which is well below the rate of inflation. I can think of many boroughs, counties and districts, such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), which would be only too delighted to have such a result. It shows how the formula works in favour of authorities with high needs, and this is hardly the moment to complain about it.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will my right hon. Friend say whether, under the new rate support grant, he will do anything about the unfairness suffered by counties such as Buckinghamshire, which have a rapid rate of population growth and whose rate support grant figures have lagged behind their population figures?

Mr. Ridley: I have great sympathy with my right hon. Friend. He will know that the reason for that is the increasing rateable value in counties such as Buckinghamshire. I notice, for example, that this year it will receive an increase in grant because of the operation of safety nets and caps. That has probably made it possible for my right hon. Friend to have a much lower rate increase in his county than would otherwise be the case. However, the unfairness is recognised; that is one reason why I look forward to my right hon. Friend joining me in the Lobby later this month to sweep the whole system away.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Secretary of State understand that there is great anger in Bradford over the fact that, since 1979, the city has been robbed of more than £70 million in rate support grant? Will he understand that Bradford is penalised for trying to meet the needs of an increasing population and that we face the prospect of being poleaxed by the poll tax? Will he understand that there will be great disappointment that he and the Minister of State declined to meet a parliamentary delegation and representatives of Bradford council to discuss these matters, on the excuse that the deadline for consultation was over, although that was not communicated to us until at least eight days after the deadline for consultation?

Mr. Ridley: All consultation periods must come to an end and an end means that they have come to an end. I notice that, if Bradford spends at the settlement assumption, it is likely to have a grant increase from £137 million to £154 million, which is more than £16 million. I find it extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman dares to come and complain about that when many authorities will lose grant. The authorities of many of my hon. Friends are losing grant left, right and centre for the hon. Gentleman's benefit. Far from a word of thanks or gratitude, we have many words of gripe.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the Conservative council of Hereford and Worcester has always kept its spending below GRE, below target and below the increase in inflation? However, owing to tinkering again this year with the support grant mechanism in respect of highways—as with last year, in respect of the civilianisation of the police — the result of that Conservative council following Government policies is that it has now been docked another £6 million of grant although its highway expenditure is only up to 75 per cent. of the 1973 level.

Mr. Ridley: I must slightly disagree with my hon. Friend about the figures. Hereford and Worcester stands to gain £2 million more grant if it spends to settlement assumption. Therefore, I do not believe that the figure of £6 million is quite right, unless that council is planning a spending spree about which neither he nor I have heard.

I believe that that is extremely unlikely. That extra £2 million will enable Hereford and Worcester to increase its rates by just under the rate of inflation and no more. That is not a bad result from the point of view of that council. I must say that the figures are not figures that I carefully work out for each authority. The figures come out of the formula that is enshrined in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. There is no way in which we can get rid of such results unless we have a new system altogether.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Minister will know that Tower Hamlets has over 1,000 homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at a cost of more than £20 million a year. What provision has he been able to make in this year's rate support grant to ease the enormous problem of that particular borough?

Mr. Ridley: I am happy to say that, if that borough does not increase its spending above the settlement assumption, it will be able to drop its rate. Of course, Tower Hamlets may prefer to go about it the other way. However, that is my answer to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend add to his reputation as a scholar of English and of the economy by confirming that neither his Department nor the Treasury will make a profit from East Sussex county council because of the storm damage on the night of 15 October?

Mr. Ridley: I would be horrified and astonished if either my Department or the Treasury were to make a profit from any authority as a result of that night. However, I must see the figures so that we can understand why it is that people are not aware that the expenditure that was incurred as a result of that storm either falls within the Bellwin rules or is subject to charging to capital account, in which case an authority will receive capital allocations, provided that it had not insured. I can think of very little expenditure that will not fall into either of those categories. I should be happy to show my hon. Friend figures that would convince him that, if that is the case —as I believe it should be—the Treasury, rather than East Sussex county council, will be the poorer.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is the Minister prepared to make any provisions for those authorities, such as many of the authorities that I represent, which are not high spenders, which have measured needs — as the right hon. Gentleman has acknowledged—which are as great as in inner-city areas, but which themselves are not inner cities? As a result, those authorities have lost any special funding such as urban aid funding. Their needs are the same, but the amount of money that they are allowed by the Government is much less. How, then, are those authorities to meet the needs that he has acknowledged, but keep within the spending limits that he has determined?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady has had the good luck not to go through this exercise quite so often as some of us. I must convince her that the figures that come out for each authority result from the global decisions that I announced in July and that I do not, as it were, target a certain amount of money according to what I think about an authority's claims. The hon. Lady will be aware that the north of England is the main beneficiary of the present system. For instance, Durham county stands to gain £6·6 million of extra grant simply because its needs are taken into account in the GRE formula. I do not believe that the hon. Lady can sustain the view that her part of the world is damaged by this settlement.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, when GRE was first introduced, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said triumphantly that no longer would the sins of the high spenders be visited on the low spenders? Yet by adhering to regression analysis—that horrible phrase —as a basis for deciding the weighting of the GRE elements, it continues to be the case that those who are historically low spenders are punished for so being compared with the high spenders. Is it not time, even while this system remains with us, to do the opposite?

Mr. Ridley: I must tell my hon. Friend that it is not the GRE which results in what he calls the punishment for low spenders; it is the fact that their rateable value increases. That is included in the 1980 Act, where there is no power to vary it. That element of the formula causes the problem which my hon. Friend identified, and I have every sympathy with him. We must go to an entirely new system to get that element of resource equalisation out of the system or my hon. Friend's complaint will be valid for as long as we stick with the present system.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State address his mind to the effect of Government spending cuts on the housing crisis in London? Is he aware that local authorities are forced to spend millions of pounds every year on bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless and that they are denied the possibility of building or buying large numbers of new houses? In the process, are we not creating a generation of unhealthy children growing up in appalling conditions in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and creating a generation of millionaires living off bed-and-breakfast money from those hotels because central Government place such tight restrictions on local government that it cannot build to alleviate the crisis? Will he reconsider the position and ensure that London authorities have enough money to provide housing to meet the needs of the people as per the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977?

Mr. Ridley: First, we are talking about rate support grant, not capital allocations for local authorities. Secondly, local authorities are not the only organisations which can build houses or convert them for the homeless. Thirdly, I invite the hon. Gentleman to linger a while—perhaps as late as midnight—so that he can be in the Lobby with us to make sure that the Housing Bill has unanimous support. That Bill is designed to bring into use much more empty accommodation, public and private, and to stimulate the private sector and housing associations to build much more housing for all classes of people in need of homes.

The hon. Gentleman might like to know that, this morning, I announced that an extra £25 million should be made available for local authorities and others to provide immediate relief to the problems of those without homes. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman putting his vote where his voice is and supporting the Housing Bill.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the local authorities such as West Sussex which have had to spend much money repairing the

[Sir Peter Hordern]

ravages of the storm will not have that expenditure counted against them in respect of cash expenditure or borrowing when it comes to the rate support grant settlement?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend was kind enough to discuss this with me, and I believe that he understands the position. Expenditure as a result of the storm may fall within the Bellwin rules, under which expenditure above the threshold will not result in an authority losing rate support grant and will attract a 75 per cent. grant from the Government. If the expenditure falls into the capital account, we shall try to make available some capital allocation. Until we get the figures from local authorities, it will be impossible to forecast the effect that it will have on next year's spending through the interest on that capital. When I receive the information, I shall reach a conclusion on that.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is it not true that, for years, the Department has consistently deprived local authorities of adequate funding? The Minister fooled no one with his statement today. Is it not true that many authorities are not meeting their statutory obligations to provide social services, housing and local authority grants? If some organisations took local authorities to court for breaking the law, who would go in the dock — local councillors or the Secretary of State?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Local authorities have increased expenditure by about 1·5 per cent. a year in real terms throughout the period of this Government. It is not true to say that they do not have enough money to discharge their responsibilities. Indeed, we are seeking ways to help them to save money so that they need not make such large demands on their ratepayers, and the current Local Government Bill will contribute to that effort.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that what he has proposed by way of safety nets will be of the same potential help as the measures that he announced 12 months ago to counties such as Bedfordshire, which would have benefited had not the ruling Labour and Liberal group gone on a big spending spree and pushed up rates by 23 per cent.?

Mr. Ridley: The safety nets, like the caps on grant gains, are designed to stop too violent a change in authorities' grant entitlements and to give them time to adjust to the volatile form of grant which arises from the current system. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that, if Bedfordshire meets its settlement spending assumption, it will receive nearly £3 million more in grant, which should enable the county to keep the rate down to about 1·5 to 2 per cent., depending on its budget. The results depend entirely upon what the county council decides to spend.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will the Minister close the black hole in the existing grants system which means that, in the case of rate-capped authorities, expenditure which is recognised for the purposes of the rate limit and the expenditure limit is still subject to grant penalty withdrawals at a rate greater than 2p in the pound? Does he recognise that, in Newcastle, closing the black hole would not relax the authority's expenditure disciplines, which are targeted — as they must be—upon the very old and the young, but would enable ratepayers to have a rate cut of more than 25 per cent?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot confirm the hon. Gentleman's figures, but one effect of rate capping is, one hopes, to limit the expenditure of the authority, with the result that it obtains more grant because it does not forfeit grant. If Newcastle spent at its settlement assumption, it would be likely to receive nearly £14 million more in grant, which is a major contribution. We shall be richly rewarded if it succeeds in stopping Newcastle being one of the highest rating authorities north of Watford.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend's Department will be aware that, because of an omission by the Treasury valuer, the Treasury did not apply to have the unused prison block and prison officer dwellings on the island reduced for rating purposes. The Department's solution was that we should re-rate empty Government properties. But I have discovered that estimates have been outstanding since 1984-85. My right hon. Friend will appreciate that Government property which is re-rated by the Treasury is normally adjusted in the following year's rate support grant, but, because this goes back for several years and because it is a Treasury omission, that will be impossible. It represents £2 per head of the population in the Isle of Wight. Will the Department give us some assistance in this matter?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that I must tell my hon. Friend that I am not aware of that complicated position in the Isle of Wight. I will write him a full response when I have made sure of my facts.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Would the Secretary of State at least concede that the description of the whole process as a battle between the low and high spenders—as some of his hon. Friends have put it — is wholly misleading? The real battle is between those traditionally low-spending authorities that want to improve services, and cannot under this Government, and those such as Manchester, which have provided good services and which are now having to pauperise some of the poorest people in Britain.

Mr. Ridley: I would not agree with the hon. Gentleman. Two factors are at work: first, the automatic operation of the rate support grant formula, based on the rateable value and the GREs expressing needs. Secondly, there are the authorities' decisions about what they are going to spend. In theory—I know it is not precise—if every authority spent according to its needs as measured by GREs there would be no difference in rates throughout the whole land, because all authorities would charge the same rates. That is what the present system is designed to achieve.

If rates are high in Manchester—I confirm that they are—the hon. Gentleman has only his own council to blame for spending well over its needs.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend will be well aware that my two excellent, responsible local authorities — Hereford and Worcester county council and Wychavon district council — have suffered yet again as a result of their responsible attitude over many years.

Further to what he said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller), will my right hon. Friend give an absolute assurance to my hon. Friend, my

local authorities and me that the absurdities and anomalies in the present system will be eliminated and not carried over when I vote with enthusiasm for his new proposals on local government finance? Will he assure me that these nonsenses will not be continued, because that is the assurance that my local authorities need?

Mr. Ridley: I give my hon. Friend that assurance wholeheartedly. There will be no resource equalisation or grant forfeit under the new system. The needs of each authority will be defined under the new system; each will receive the appropriate grant, and that will be the end of the story.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Gentleman not agree that certain parts of the country have greater needs than others? Will he accept that, in a city such as Liverpool, which has lost between £500 million and £600 million in rate support grant since the Government came to power, the needs of the people are great? Is it not ridiculous that the right hon. Gentleman should continue rate capping for that city, and meet it and arrange to have discussions without talking about the whole issue of redetermination?

Mr. Ridley: The needs of Liverpool and every other city and district in the country are assessed in the GREAs. [AN HON. MEMBER: "They are not."] They are, and that is why grant flows. Almost a further £10 million is likely to flow to Liverpool because its needs are recognised. One cannot have a recognition of needs in GREAs, and then say that those needs have not been recognised. That is where the hon. Gentleman is wrong. Rate capping has been of great help to some cities, and will be to Liverpool, because, if they were allowed unrestrainedly to put up their rates, the damage that would be done in terms of lost jobs, industry and income would be simply appalling. So there is everything to be said for it. Liverpool city council has not applied for redetermination, so how could I possibly have considered it?

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Bearing in mind that I, like many of my hon. Friends, cannot wait to join my right hon. Friend in the Lobby finally to sweep away this complicated system, and that the aim, which I fully support, is to curb the high spenders, will my right hon. Friend help me get across to the low-spending Broadland district council a solution to the problem that it feels that it has been unfairly treated and penalised for low spending time and time again? Somehow, there is a problem; will he examine the comparison between Broadland district council and Norwich city council, both of which are in my constituency? That comparison has caused great puzzlement, and I should like further enlightenment about it.

Mr. Ridley: I agree that these things are hard to understand, because they are the product of a formula rather than any rational or logical judgment. That is why they had better be swept away.

Although there has been a loss of grant to Broadland district council, the effect at ratepayer level, when the grant to the county is taken into account, is not great and not much above the likely rate of inflation — if the council spends at the settlement assumption. I hope that my hon. Friend will convey to his district council the fact that it is probably something to do with its rateable value or low needs that causes the council to believe that, in some way, it is being singled out for adverse treatment. In fact, it is due to the formula on which we are operating, and which is outwith of the control of Ministers. The only solution is to start with a new system.

Mr. Rooker: We shall want more information about the apparent £25 million of new money for the homeless about which the right hon. Gentleman spoke. There will be a chance for that later.

In response to his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), the Secretary of State spoke about local authorities getting the grant that is appropriate, without any of these other problems. Will he answer the only question that I originally asked him to which he has so far not alluded? Under the new system, after he has swept away the existing Conservative-invented system of rate support grant, there will still be safety nets funded by three quarters of all authorities for the quarter of the remaining authorities; there will still be grant-related expenditure and poll tax capping. That stands every chance of being as complicated and unfair to many authorities as the existing system.

Mr. Ridley: On the first question, I shall show the hon. Gentleman a copy of the news release in which a further £25 million is made available to authorities in the current financial year because there has been an underspend on capital. Of the £44·7 million that has been made available, £25 million is specifically directed to helping the homeless, which is the most that we judge that authorities would be able to spend in the short time remaining of this financial year.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, there are two separate safety nets. The first is the one that we have been discussing this afternoon. The safety net proposed for the community charge is one that phases out the high level of rates in certain areas over four years, then ceases to exist and cannot be brought back into the equation. That is a different type of safety net from the one that we have been discussing; but the grant to each authority, particularly after the four-year transitional period, will be based on that authority's needs as assessed by a new system that I hope will be simpler than the present one, but equally accurate. When that grant is paid, it will not be subject to abatement, targets, holdback or grant underclaim of any sort. Nor will it be subject to the spending of the authority in any way, so the grant will then be the authority's, and we shall not have the problems which my hon. Friends have so rightly identified—those of losing grant for no apparent reason.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret that it was not possible to call all hon. Members who have risen. If they remind me when we come to debate the matter, I shall give them precedence in the debate.

North Tees General Hospital

4.19 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure without notice of further hospital wards in the North Tees general hospital in Stockton, and the 50 per cent. reduction in the number of beds in the intensive care unit."

The closure relates to two wards in that hospital—ward 3, which is a maternity provision ward, and beds in the children's ward for paediatric provision; together with a 50 per cent. reduction in the intensive care unit, which has only six beds in total. Three wards are to be closed, and one of the three remaining ones is occupied by young Nathalie Olds, who has occupied it ever since she was born, as that is the only way in which she can stay alive. So only one third of intensive care provision is left in the North Tees hospital.

That is in addition to the closures that I raised with you, Mr. Speaker, a week ago today under Standing Order No. 20. I referred to the 48 elderly care beds and the 44 surgical beds that were to be removed, and the one theatre session per day that was to be ended. That is how specific the matter is. It is important because, as I said at the time, North Tees general hospital is the only provision for a community of more than 100,000 people north of the Tees. Any reduction in the services given by that hospital would have an immediate and significant effect. It is a dereliction of duty for the Secretary of State to allow that. Under the legislation, he has a duty to make such provision.

The matter is urgent, for this reason. At least last week's closures were announced to the community health council before they took place, but these closures are to be announced to the community health council next month, after they have taken place. Therefore, it is more important that we have this debate today.

Last Thursday, in the Health Service debate, the junior health Minister, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), leapt in and out of that debate with all the grace and skill of a runaway sideboard. She had the effrontery to tell me, or at least imply, that I did not have a clue what I was saying and that I knew nothing about North Tees general hospital.

I beg you, Mr. Speaker, to allow us a debate on that emergency topic today. I could then show the House what I know about the health care conditions in North Tees and how the matter needs immediate attention.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure without notice of further hospital wards in the North Tees general hospital in Stockton, and the 50 per cent. reduction in the number of beds in the intensive care unit."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but he knows that my duty in assessing whether to grant a Standing Order No. 20 debate is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that his submission meets the criteria of Standing Order No. 20 applications, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Ordered,

That the draft Medicines (Exemption from Licences) (Carbadox and Olaquindox) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That the matter of Education in Scotland, being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration. — *[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Orders of the Day

Housing Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before we start this important debate, I should announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the leader of the Liberal party. I repeat what I have said earlier, that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye in the debate. I appeal for short contributions.

4.22 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main purpose of the Bill, which seeks to implement many of the proposals in our White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals", is to make a cautious move towards evolving a new policy for rented housing. I say "cautious", because it is a cautious and measured move, so that all who have the interests at heart of the citizens who need or prefer to rent rather than to buy their homes may be encouraged to support the policy.

If ever there were a subject where political dispute has done grave harm to the interests of the less well-off, it is in rented housing. It is high time that there was an agreed way forward. I do not pretend that this measure will be the last that the House will see of the subject over the decade ahead, but I would rather that in future we were debating how to improve these provisions than to be stuck in the stalemate of a doctrinaire disagreement as we have been since 1915—the year when the first rent restrictions were introduced.

First, I shall summarise briefly the chequered history of rent controls in the private sector. The restrictions introduced in 1915 froze rents at 1914 levels for about two thirds of all unfurnished lettings, with statutory security of tenure. Those controls were extended in 1919 and 1920 to cover virtually all unfurnished lettings.

In 1937, an interdepartmental committee on the rent restrictions Acts produced a report recommending immediate decontrol of lettings with rateable values above specified limits; phased decontrol for lettings with lower rateable values; and the end of decontrol of new lettings. In 1939, at the outbreak of war, virtually all unfurnished lettings were made the subject of control, with rents frozen at September 1939 levels.

A second interdepartmental committee produced a report in 1945 recommending that all rents should be registered with local authorities and that rent tribunals should determine fair rents. I ought, in fairness to the House, to declare an interest in both those committees: they were chaired by my father and were widely known as the Ridley committees.

Those elaborate controls were replaced by the Rent Act 1957. It provided for the immediate decontrol of existing lettings where the rateable value exceeded £40 in London and Scotland, and £30 elsewhere.

The decontrol provisions were in turn replaced by the Labour Government in 1965 with security of tenure for tenants of unfurnished lettings and a system of so-called "fair rents". Those provisions were extended to furnished lettings in 1974. That is broadly the system that has been in force ever since. When one looks at the period as a whole, the consequences are plain to see: private renting has declined from 30 per cent of the housing stock in 1914 to just under 8 per cent. today.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The right hon. Gentleman has been giving a potted history of rent control legislation. He mentioned the Rent Act 1957, which was intended by the Conservative Government, so we were told when the Bill was debated, to ensure that there was a far greater supply of privately rented accommodation. Is it not a fact that the 1957 Act led to two things—first, a substantial reduction in rented accommodation, and all the figures prove that to be so; and, secondly, the scandal of Rachmanism, whereby all the pressure and intimidation was put on the existing tenant so that that accommodation could be released and automatically decontrolled? Much of that is being repeated in the Bill today.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is right to some extent in his analysis of what was wrong with the 1957 Act. It is exactly because of that that we wish to avoid those mistakes. That Act applied to some existing lettings, and the Bill applies to none. Secondly, it removed all statutory controls over new lettings, leaving both rents and security as a matter of contract. Thirdly, there was no comprehensive statutory protection from eviction, so that landlords could easily evict tenants without recourse to the courts, whereas now we have legislation already and the Bill greatly tightens up the legislation against harassment. Fourthly, there was no housing benefit system to provide tenants with help towards the higher rents that ensue from decontrol. Doubtless the hon. Gentleman will try to make use of those points in the debate, but I hope that I can persuade him that we have learnt those lessons.

So the private rented sector has suffered a substantial decline since the first world war but, over the same period, the public sector has seen a major expansion. At the end of the 1930s, the public sector housing stock consisted of about 1·1 million homes. After the second world war, public sector house building increased dramatically: by 1979, local authorities, together with the new towns, owned and managed some 5·5 million homes.

To manage that number of houses is a massive undertaking, and that is precisely what went wrong. Local authorities have found themselves landlords of vast numbers of houses, flats and maisonettes—about 50,000 is not an uncommon number in the larger metropolitan authorities. As a result, councils have faced an enormous administrative and management task. Almost inevitably, it has led to insensitive allocation procedures and to queuing, which make tenants feel like supplicants. Often cumbersome, remote and inflexible arrangements for the management and maintenance of properties have grown up.

Those managements have led to physical decay and decline. Much post-war local authority housing, built in a hurry, is in enormous estates, either in the inner city or on the periphery of the conurbations. Those places are often monotonous, soulless places in which few would choose to live—if they had a choice. The worst such estates suffer from poor design and layout; bad repair; a poor environment with vandalism, graffiti and rubbish-strewn streets and open spaces; and high levels of crime. No one responds to the tenants' cry for help.

[Mr. Ridley]

I do not lay all the blame for this at the door of local authorities. Some authorities have proved appallingly inefficient in managing their estates and disgracefully unresponsive to the wishes of their tenants, but many others have done their best to act as good landlords. But we cannot ignore the fact that mass landlord provision has failed to give tenants what they want; they have been all too vulnerable to the kind of difficulties I have described. We cannot leave them to suffer. This is the problem we now have to tackle.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): If the Minister is so concerned about the welfare of tenants—and if he is, I welcome that conversion—given that the surveys show that more people in the private sector than in the public sector are dissatisfied with their landlords, why is he not providing the same choices to them?

Mr. Ridley: Because, since 1915, the rent restrictions have resulted in inadequate rent for the private sector and therefore inadequate repair. That problem is being dealt with in part I of the Bill.

The suggestion that we want to end the role of local authorities in housing is nonsense: with some 4·5 million homes on their books, it is inconceivable that they will not remain major providers of rented housing for the foreseeable future. We are trying to shift the future emphasis of their role from direct provision to securing the provision of housing by other agencies and organisations. That is why we want to encourage the growth of other types of independent landlord in the rented sector. For those already in the public sector, we want to provide more choice and flexibility, encourage better management standards among local authorities through the introduction of competition and make a start on tackling the problems of the worst council estates. Those are the objects of the Bill.

The Bill does not implement all the proposals in the White Paper. We expect to introduce all our housing proposals, but the pressure on the legislative timetable means that we have not been able to include all the proposals in this Bill. We have therefore concentrated on the rented sector. Proposals for reform of local authority housing accounts and for the simplification and improved targeting of home improvement grants will be included in future legislation. On the right to buy, we remain committed to measures which will compensate tenants whose purchases are held up without good reason and we hope to bring forward amendments during the passage of the Bill. On the proposals to abolish the cost floor, we are considering very carefully again all the views that have been put to us, and it may well not feature in this year's Bill.

Part I of the Bill concerns the private rented sector. It provides that most new lettings will be either assured tenancies or assured shorthold tenancies. The system of registered fair rents will continue for existing lettings, but will no longer be available for most new lettings.

Under the terms of the new assured tenancy, set out in chapter I, market rents will be freely negotiable between landlord and tenant, but the tenant will have long-term security of tenure comparable with that available under the present Rent Act. The new assured tenancy builds on the existing assured tenancy scheme, but with a number of important changes: first, landlords who can grant assured tenancies will no longer be confined to companies and partnerships.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the Minister confirm that the nature of assured tenancies will be totally altered in this legislation and that they will not be the same as the assured tenancies legislated for in the 1980 Act? Their whole nature will alter; they are not assured tenancies but something different with the same name. Will he explain why the shorthold tenancy provisions of the 1980 Act, which his party claimed would bring many empty properties on the market into the private sector, have not worked?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman interrupted me to ask about what I was describing. I was answering his point as he rose. I will come to shorthold tenancies later.

There are changes to assured tenancies: first, landlords who can grant assured tenancies will no longer be confined to companies and partnerships—all landlords, including individuals, will be able to do so; second, tenancies will no longer be limited to new or improved dwellings; and, thirdly, the requirement that landlords of such tenancies should be approved by the Secretary of State will be ended. The Bill provides that, where a landlord and a tenant are unable to agree on a change in the rent level, a rent assessment committee will be able to fix a rent at a market level. They are identical, except for those three changes.

I ought to say a few words about the ending of the approved landlord system, since I know that Opposition Members attach particular importance to it. A system of approval in the new regime would frankly be unworkable. We estimate that, within five years of commencement, up to 190,000 landlords would be letting on the new basis as a result of turnover within the sector alone. The task of vetting and approving them all would be a bureaucratic nightmare; would be likely to be ineffective in any event; and would in all probability deter many landlords, particularly small landlords, while not necessarily extracting the bad eggs. While I have an open mind on this issue, I am bound to say that compulsory registration does not seem to me to be feasible.

Mr. Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I ask the Minister for two points of clarification. First, are the mandatory and discretionary grounds for possession given to the courts in schedule 2 the same as those in existing legislation, or are there variations; if so, would he outline them? Secondly, he will not know, but his officials will know, that during the passage of the Rent Act 1974 our late right hon. Friend Sir Graham Page and I drew attention to a trap that existed for those who held joint tenancies on trust for sale. Ministers at the time denied that. Our interpretation was subsequently upheld by the court and in consequence one of my constituents suffered considerable financial loss. Ministers have promised to put right that anomaly. I cannot see it in the Bill, and I wonder whether my right hon. Friend can assist me.

Mr. Ridley: Those are highly complex technical points. My hon. Friend will forgive me if I refer him to schedule 2 of the Bill, which sets out the terms of possession provisions in full, but I will follow that up with a letter explaining the precise differences. On the second point, the Bill puts right the problem that my hon. Friend raises, although not retrospectively. Again, I will confirm that point to him.

The new shorthold tenancy, which the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) asked about, and which is dealt with in chapter II of the Bill, is designed to meet the needs of landlords who wish to let their property for a fixed term and be certain of regaining possession at the end of the term.

The rent for a shorthold tenancy would be negotiable between the landlord and the tenant, but the tenant will be able to apply to the rent committee for a rent to be registered at any time once the tenancy has started. The committee will compare the rent for the tenancy with other market rents for shortholds of similar property in the area and, if it is excessive, will be empowered to reduce it. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's point is the difference between market rents and so-called fair rents, which are not fair to the landlord in giving him a return on his investment.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I am obliged to my right hon. Friend for giving way in the important passage of the speech concerning rent. Will he confirm that, as the only difference between the assured tenancy and the assured shorthold tenancy is that the former will have indefinite security of tenure, and the latter will have a set market rent, what will be the incentive to let on an assured tenancy rather than a shorthold tenancy? If I am correct in the suggestion that the overwhelming temptation will be to have assured shorthold tenancies, the rent set for assured tenancies may be above market rent, because that will be the cost of people being able to buy into an indefinite period of secured tenancy.

Mr. Ridley: The assured tenancy scheme will be attractive to people in the business of long-term letting, such as companies, building societies and so on, and they will readily agree to security of tenure. My hon. Friend is not quite right. The original rent will be determined entirely by negotiation between the tenant and the landlord, and there will be no appeal against that to the committee. On the other hand, in the case of shorthold there will be an appeal to the committee to determine a market rent, but the security of tenure is limited to the period of the shorthold. That will be attractive to people who perhaps are going abroad for a few years or who have a spare house that they wish to let or rooms in a house that they wish to rent. That will bring further empty property on to the market.

Mr. Allan Roberts: As I understand it, the Secretary of State is saying that the shorthold provisions of the 1980 Act failed to make available more houses in the private rented sector, and that that was not because the concept of shorthold was at fault but because the rents were not high enough. That meant that the private owners could not get a big enough return from the properties and did not rent them. Will the Minister confirm that he is saying that? Does he accept that the shorthold provision is such that, for many of the houses that came on to the market, fair rents were not set because of a fear by the tenant that if he tried to get a fair rent assessed and set he would have his shorthold tenancy renewed at the end of the period?

Mr. Ridley: There have been many shorthold tenancies since the system came into existence. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a figure, but clearly the threat of having the rent registered at a level below the economic rent that is needed to buy and maintain a property is a slight deterrent to people who want to bring forward such properties. That is why there are many empty private sector houses and flats. We seek to have them brought into use because that is one of the main ways of easing the problem of homelessness — especially in London. The hon. Gentleman seems to put the past in front of the much more important matter of getting these houses on to the market and allowng them to be used.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the Secretary of State tell us what the position will be for a prospective tenant who does not have a high income? In London, for example, how will a market rent accommodate low-paid or non-paid people who need to rent? How can they be assured that they will have an income sufficient to pay the rent that the market will demand? Can the Secretary of State tell the House that anybody who does not have the necessary income will be guaranteed the shortfall and that it will be made up by housing benefit and the social security system?

Mr. Ridley: It is clear that anybody who qualifies for housing benefit will qualify for the full amount of the rent that his accommodation costs him. However, there are three provisos and I shall come to them shortly. The hon. Gentleman will find them acceptable.

The other major change contained in this part of the Bill concerns harassment of tenants. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Bootle. Under existing law, it is an offence for any person to harass a residential occupier with the intention of causing him to leave his home. The test of intent has in practice been difficult to prove, and the Bill therefore provides an additional offence of harassing an occupier knowing that this was likely to drive him out. This is likely to be easier to prove.

In addition, the Bill provides for a new civil right to improved compensation for tenants driven out by harassment or illegally evicted. Such tenants would be entitled to compensation based on the financial gain to the landlord of securing vacant possession of his property. This will be a very powerful deterrent to landlords who have always been tempted to realise substantial profits by driving out their tenants by harassment or illegal eviction. Our proposals make it less likely—not more likely—that landlords will be tempted to harass tenants to get vacant possession. There is a strong incentive for them to do so now in order to sell on the open market, but if they can get a reasonable rate of return they will have more incentive than they have at present to retain the property and to rent it out.

Part I of the Bill also applies to housing associations. In future, most housing association new lettings will be either assured or shorthold tenancies. This will enable them to charge rather higher rents than the fair rents that they presently charge. However, these will not be full market rents because Government grants will continue to be available via the Housing Corporation to ensure that rents are kept at a level that the traditional clientele of housing associations can afford. However, this greater flexibility on rents will enable housing associations to attract private finance to supplement their grant allocations. This is a very important innovation because it will enable housing associations to provide more housing for a given amount of public money, while still meeting the needs of their traditional lower-income clientele.

[Mr. Ridley]

I shall shortly say more about the new rent regime for housing associations. A new rent regime clearly needs new grant arrangements to go with it. Existing legislation on housing association grants and rent surpluses is insufficiently flexible for this purpose and excessively detailed. Part II of the Bill provides this much broader framework.

I shall now tell the House how we envisage rents and subsidies working out in the context of our proposals for deregulating the private rented sector and introducing greater flexibility into housing association rents. Hon. Members will appreciate that a key feature of our proposals is the new scope for rents to rise so as to provide a greater return — whether to attract more private landlords into the field or to provide housing associations with a level of income sufficient to service private loans. Of course, a crucial factor in all this is the ability of tenants to pay.

In the private sector, rents will move towards market levels. Any Government support will focus on tenants, rather than on property, through the housing benefit system. Hon. Members may be assured that housing benefit will be available for all those whose incomes are low enough to qualify for full or partial benefit, irrespective of the rent charged, with three exceptions. These are the three provisos that I mentioned to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). They are, first, where there is conniving to milk the Exchequer by charging an unreasonably high rent for the property in question on the basis of a market rent test; secondly, where the claimant is clearly over-accommodated and has far more rooms than he needs; and, thirdly, where the property is of a quality that the majority of people would not ordinarily expect to afford.

The object here is not to exercise detailed controls over where people live and how much they pay; it is simply a matter of protecting public funds. Taxpayers' money ought not to be used to allow landlords to inflate rents to excessive levels or to permit benefit recipients to occupy over-large or up-market accommodation. Accordingly, we shall introduce new provisions under which rent officers will assume the function of assessing rents and accommodation for housing benefit purposes. On the basis of their assessment, rent allowance subsidy will be restricted in cases where the rent is unreasonably high or the property unduly large and benefit itself would be limited at the most expensive end of the market. Should it prove necessary for those reasons, we shall introduce further limits on benefit.

Some commentators have pointed to the fact that those whose incomes take them just above housing benefit levels will find it hard to justify renting from the private sector. Indeed, it will often be cheaper for them to buy a home, given the advantages of buying with mortgage interest tax relief. This is an inevitable result of this relief which—at least at the basic rate of tax and certainly for new buyers —has all-party support. This reflects all-party desire to help all who can afford to do so to buy their own homes. We cannot have it both ways. Nevertheless, there will remain many people for whom renting will still be the first option, whether in the private or social rented sector. That includes people on low incomes, those whose jobs require them to be mobile, single people sharing flats and those who will take rooms in someone's house. I expect this Bill to make a major contribution to ending the shortage of premises to rent in London and other places and to be a major contributor to solving the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): I am most interested in my right hon. Friend's remarks about solving the problems. I am sure that part 1 of the Bill will be very helpful, but it seems to refer mostly to urban and inner-city areas. Will my right hon. Friend explain how the Bill may help to solve the rural housing problem, which is developing, not least because of the success of the Government's right-to-buy proposals, coupled in certain popular rural areas, such as Wiltshire, with a reduction in the number of tied cottages? The consequence of that is that many young couples from the indigenous local population simply cannot find local authority or other housing. Will the Bill help such people and is it designed to do so?

Mr. Ridley: This Bill and the Local Government Bill, which is in Committee at the moment, are designed to make a major contribution to solving that very problem. In future, both housing associations and private landlords —for example, a local farmer or a resident in a village —will be able to build to rent and will be able to obtain subsidy from the local authority or the Housing Corporation to ensure that they can let those houses at affordable rents. It is likely that the problem will turn out to relate as much to the obtaining of planning permission as to the ability to rent. The Bill is specifically designed to help to solve the rural housing problem referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison), and I hope that it will succeed.

I should like to welcome the recent initiative by the Nationwide Anglia building society. Nationwide Anglia announced last week that it was involved in setting up a new company, called Quality Street, to which it will lend £600 million over the next five years. The company intends to provide up to 40,000 good quality, well managed, privately let homes at different levels in the market— initially in Glasgow but later in other cities, too. That is the kind of action that we need to improve the quality of rented housing and provide greater choice for consumers. It shows that there are private sector organisations keen to invest in rented housing. Our plans to revive the private rented sector in this Bill will create the right climate for further imaginative initiatives of this sort. The Nationwide Anglia initiative relates mainly to the cities, but I hope that others will come forward with similar proposals for villages and small towns in the country, where there is just as much need.

In the social rented sector — essentially housing associations and council housing—there is a balance to be struck between subsidising people and subsidising property. We favour a change in the current balance towards support for people and away from bricks and mortar subsidy. However, we certainly do not propose any sudden or dramatic changes that would bear harshly upon tenants. Indeed, current housing association tenants will be unaffected for as long as they remain in their present homes.

New housing association tenants will pay a rent which the association will set itself without reference to the rent officer. The rent for a particular dwelling will be determined by its cost and by the contribution that the Exchequer makes available through grant. As I said, we

are also looking for increased private sector finance for housing associations. It is too early to say what the new grant rates will be or what rents they will produce. Rents will be higher than existing fair rents, but the broad intention is that associations should be able to set rents that could reasonably be met by housing association tenants in work.

Part III contains provisions for the establishment of housing action trusts. Earlier, I described some of the appalling conditions in which tenants on some of the larger estates in our inner cities and conurbations now live. I described the problems of architectural experiments that have turned out to be an insult to the people who have to live in them and who face daily the problems of disrepair, dereliction and crime. The people who live in such places deserve better. However, in the worst of these areas, it is now beyond the capacity of local authorities to deal with the problems.

Housing action trusts will make a start in tackling those problems. Based broadly on the model of the highly successful urban development corporations, the trusts are intended to be short-life bodies which will take over large areas of rundown council housing—perhaps up to 5,000 or 6,000 homes — and refurbish and improve them before passing them on to new forms of ownership and management. The trusts will also have powers to enable them to undertake or contribute to measures designed to regenerate local economic activity, employment initiatives, the provision of amenities and other facilities for local people.

This part of the Bill provides for me to designate housing action trust areas and to establish trusts for those areas. It sets out the kinds of matters—for example, the condition of the housing, the way in which it is being managed and the general social and environmental conditions of the area—which I may take into account before doing so. Both the designation and the establishment of trusts are to be effected by orders subject to affirmative resolution of both Houses.

In the designated areas, the trusts will have most of the housing functions of the local authority. To ensure that trusts can tackle their tasks as efficiently and effectively as possible, the Bill provides that the trusts may also be given various functions such as development control by order and various other planning and public health functions. The extent to which such powers are granted will inevitably depend to some extent on the degree of co-operation that the housing action trusts can establish with the local authorities.

It is my strong preference that the trusts should be able to proceed with the full co-operation of local authorities. Opponents of the proposal have sought to depict it as an anti-local authority measure. They are wrong. The trusts are a special instrument devised to deal with very special problems. It would be most unfortunate if local authorities adopted a hostile stance towards them, as they offer perhaps the only chance of rescuing areas of housing and their tenants in some of the most miserable estates in the country. Nevertheless, I do not rule out establishing trusts even where the local authority adopts a doctrinaire stance of hostility, if I consider that that is the only way in which we can help some of its tenants.

The trusts must regard as central the interests of existing tenants in the areas that they take on. Hon. Members will note that the Bill provides for the trusts to consult tenants and other residents fully about their plans for the area and to report to me on the outcome of that consultation exercise. That is particularly important. There can be no question of the trusts' riding roughshod over the views of tenants.

Part IV of the Bill applies to all tenants in the council sector. As I said, council tenants have simply had to take what they are given by way of accommodation and service from their landlord and put up with it. While many local authorities have an undeniably good record as landlords, a significant number do not. They have managed properties inefficiently and with little respect for tenants' wishes and have provided a poor service. Such failings characterise a monopoly, where the spur of competition is absent and the consumer is unable to take his business elsewhere.

The proposals in part IV of the Bill are designed to restore some balance by giving the tenant a choice—the right to seek an alternative landlord. This will introduce the spur of competition into the local authority rented sector for the first time. This can only benefit all tenants, whether or not they choose to remain in that sector. Indeed, it has already started to do so.

Provisions in this part of the Bill define the people and property in respect of which the right to seek a new landlord may be exercised. Essentially, they will be secure tenants of local housing authorities, new towns and housing action trusts. The clauses also specify that only landlords approved by the Housing Corporation may apply to purchase the freehold of tenanted homes under this part of the Bill. Such landlords might include registered housing associations, a tenants' co-operative or a private firm. Nationwide Anglia has made it clear that it stands ready to help.

The Bill sets out the procedures that are to apply. There are also provisions requiring the would-be landlord to consult tenants. Any tenant who expresses a wish to remain a tenant of the local authority will be able to do so. Houses of such tenants will remain in council ownership. In the case of blocks of flats, the transfer will not be able to go ahead if more than half the tenants object, and, if a transfer goes ahead, the new landlord will be required to grant the local authority a lease on the flats of those tenants who wish to remain tenants of the local authority, thus safeguarding their position. The new right is vital in giving the council tenant the genuine opportunity to vote with his feet if he regards his local authority landlord as unsatisfactory.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: This Bill marks a major step forward in improving the opportunities, choices and conditions of all those who rent rather than buy their own homes. The Government want to see more and better housing for rent. This Bill creates the opportunity for putting private and public finance to work to create more choice and more competition. I commend it to the House.

5 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I begin by apologising on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who has suffered a minor but painful accident. We expect him to be back with us in full fighting form in the near future.

As we begin the debate on what I regard as an irrelevant and, at times, damaging Bill we must remember that there

[Mr. Clive Soley]

are many people in this country who live in warm, comfortable, well-built, well-constructed and well-repaired homes. That is due to the contribution of Labour Governments and Labour authorities in the past and it has been supported by Conservative Governments and Conservative local authorities as well. There was a time when the political debate on housing in this country hinged on the issue of how many houses and flats had been built or renovated and what the quality of the stock was like. That is no longer true. The Government have destroyed any consensus on housing. If they believe that they have simply destroyed the consensus with the Labour party, let me tell them how wrong they are. The Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils said:

"The record of housing authorities is generally good—they should not be blamed for any general social problems that may be manifest in urban centres. These are conditions which are found in many countries".

Therefore, the role of local authorities is supported by the Association of District Councils. The role of local authorities is also supported by Rural Voice, which also obtained support from the National Farmers Union and other organisations. I will be referring to those organisations throughout the debate because we know that we have their support as well as support across the board from Labour and Liberal local authorities. We know that over the past eight or nine years we have watched the Government rip into the morale of local authority employees and local authority councillors. In doing that they are undermining local democracy in this country.

Housing was recognised by successive Governments as being vital to the welfare of the nation. We all knew, and still know, that a person who lives in poor or inadequate housing is likely to suffer greater health problems. We know that people who live in poor or inadequate housing are less likely to do well in education. We know that if one does not have a good housing policy, particularly if homelessness is pushed up to record levels as it is under this Government, there will be a dramatic increase in crime. When the Government introduced the board and lodging allowance, they pushed more and more young people into homelessness and, consequently, into drug abuse, alcohol abuse and crime. The figures were produced by the Government, by their own Home Secretary, and they know that. That is one of the most damaging things the Government have done.

There was supposed to be consultation about the Bill. The consultation papers often required a response within four weeks. Were tenants to be consulted in that time? Oh no, tenants do not really matter, whether private or public. That is why we shall give the House an opportunity to vote to put the Bill before a Special Standing Committee of the House. That would provide an opportunity for the various bodies, including Conservative-controlled organisations such as the ADC, to give evidence to the Committee. Let them do that. If the Government really believe that they have the support of even their own party in rural areas, let the organisations give evidence to the Standing Committee and let us see some of the Conservative Members in the Lobby with us; that is unless the Government believe that the Bill should go to a Special Standing Committee.

The Minister for Housing and Planning, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), did not even know when the Housing Bill was to be published. He told me that it would be published at the end of November. In fact, it came out on Friday 20 November after various queries from the media which had heard a rumour that it was to be published. The Bill was published with the word "Restricted" stamped on it. That was because, as everybody knows, it was a draft document. In other words, consultation was not taken into account.

There are deep divisions within the Government on the issue of housing. I can provide one little example straight from Conservative Central Office. The Secretary of State and the Minister both made speeches on housing and the wording is the same except for two words and they totally turn round the meaning of the statement. On 19 May 1987 the Secretary of State said:

"The quantity of housing available for renting overall is probably sufficient to cater for the numbers of households needing rented accommodation."

One month later on 19 June 1987 the Minister said:

"The quantity of housing available for renting is insufficient to cater for the number of households needing rented accommodation."

That is an example—we have other evidence—of the fact that the Minister is in disagreement with his Secretary of State on what they are trying to do.

The consequence of the Government's policy since 1979 is the creation of a desperately serious and growing housing crisis throughout the United Kingdom. When one of the Conservative Back-Benchers interrupted to say that the Bill deals with city areas but does nothing for rural areas, he was right. The Bill will do nothing for rural areas. The report of the ADC and the report of Rural Voice make it clear that there is a serious and damaging decline in the rented sector and a serious and damaging decline in the standard of maintenance in rural and semi-rural areas as well as in urban areas. We know that.

The Bill is largely irrelevant and, in many cases, positively damaging. What is the nature of the crisis? First, there is a crisis in house price inflation. Secondly, there is a disgraceful crisis in homelessness and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Thirdly, there is a dramatic loss of rented housing, which is forcing up waiting lists. Fourthly, and underlying the other problems, there is a collapse of public sector building and a housing finance system that has been pushed into chaos by the Government and distorted the rented and purchasing markets. There is nothing in the Bill to deal with house price inflation. Prices are likely to remain distorted throughout the United Kingdom.

If unemployed people in the north want to come to the south for a job they will either have to stay where they are and commute—driving up and down the motorway if they can get a group together to do that, as some people do—or leave home. When I went to Exeter a short while ago one of the first people I met was a man looking for a job. He had left his family in Newcastle and was paying £70 a week in a hostel set up for the homeless. He hoped to find a job for the coming tourist season. That is becoming all too common a picture in our country. It applies wherever one goes, not just to urban areas. It means that a couple who save to buy a home or to trade up on their existing home if they have children can be forced into serious debt by mortgage rate increases or unemployment. Repossessions in the private sector have increased fourfold. That is the measure of the crisis for those people. A dream for many people has turned into a

nightmare. If one looks at the number of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, one finds that a significant minority are there because their homes have been repossessed.

What about the promise of more help to repair and improve? The Secretary of State said—I listened to him carefully—that they were thinking of doing that a little later. It is a pity that they could not have done it sooner. The Green Paper was published two and a half years ago. This Bill is a missed opportunity. The ADC, Rural Voice and other organisations have criticised the Bill for that.

The Bill does nothing about homelessness or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The White Paper did not even mention homelessness. The word did not appear in it at all. Yet homelessness is at record levels in this country. At Christmas we shall be asked to remember those who are homeless or in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and those who are sleeping under the bridges not very far from here. Indeed, when hon. Members go home tonight they may well see the same body that has been sleeping in that box beside the entrance of Westminster tube station for some months now.

We all acknowledge that some people will always be homeless—the burnt-out, vagrant, schizophrenic or the alcoholic who refuses to accept any help. But we are not in that league any more; it is entirely different. We are talking about thousands and thousands of people forced to sleep rough and desperate for a roof over their heads.

Last year, 200,000 people applied as homeless to local authorities. Only 100,000 could be accepted. The January 1987 report of the Department of the Environment, referring to houses in multiple occupation, said that there were 1·9 million single people living in hostels, bed-sits and bed-and-breakfast accommodation who wanted a self-contained home. The report found that four fifths of those houses in multiple occupation had no adequate fire escape and 60 per cent. lacked adequate amenities. One third of the tenants had to share a bathroom with at least six others. The estimated national cost of doing up those properties was £3·6 billion. The average income of the people living there was £90 a week whereas the average rent paid was £27 a week—almost a third of their pay. But the Secretary of State has been telling us that rents are not high enough. The Government argue that, when the rents go up — perhaps by 50 per cent. — suddenly a miracle will occur and properties will appear on the market. That is wicked nonsense.

A recent survey in Hackney found that 64 per cent. of homeless single people were under 26, and I refer to my previous comments on the way in which crime and drug and alcohol abuse are linked to homelessness and poor accommodation. There are 11,000 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at a cost of £12,000 per family per annum. If we provided them with a newly built council house, the cost would be £7,000 per family per annum. The Secretary of State has told us that he will make another £25 million available, but we shall look at the small print. I have learnt with this Government, and especially this Secretary of State and this Department of the Environment, to look at the small print. Conservative Members found recently with the rate support grant that, although they might have thought that they would get more, they in fact got less. Conservative Back Benchers criticised that rate support grant—not for the first time —because it did not deliver the goods that they had constantly promised their local authorities.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): The hon. Gentleman is a fair man so, when he has examined the small print and found that there are no such problems, will he write and congratulate us?

Mr. Soley: I shall do much more — I shall get together a meeting of all the Conservative Members who criticise this policy and, if they will sign the letter, I shall do so, too. But they must demonstrate that their local authorities will not be worse off. We have heard the questions and shall have no difficulty in pursuing that point.

The Government's policy in the Bill is deregulation of the private sector and damaging intervention on housing associations. As the Secretary of State admitted, the Government tried this crazy idea in 1957 and again in 1980. In 1957 a new word entered the English language — "Rachmanism". The Secretary of State should remember that everyone acknowledges that some of Mr. Rachman's activities were illegal, but he was never convicted of anything. I criticise the Liberal amendment because the Liberals do not recognise—I hope that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who is a lawyer, will recognise this—that the law on harassment is not strong.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the effects of the Rent Act 1957. Will he consider this point? What happened was the direct result of the Labour party promising at once to repeal that legislation and bring back controls once more. Obviously, an owner who won vacant possession did not want to run the risk of the Labour party doing that, so he sold out at the first opportunity. That was the reason for the decline in the private rented sector, for which successive Labour Governments have been responsible.

Mr. Soley: That is one of the most naive explanations that I have every heard. I shall take the hon. Gentleman through the argument and, if he follows me, he might begin to understand why I said that.

In 1980, the Government introduced shorthold tenancies and certain technical changes with respect to rent increases. Following the 1957 changes, there was the biggest ever single decrease in the number of rented properties available apart possibly from the present time. Since the beginning of this century, there has been a steady, almost straight-line-graph decline in the private rented sector. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will find that when Governments of various political complexions, going back to 1915—as the Secretary of State said—introduced a form of rent control, there was no change in the rate of decline. It stayed constant. Since 1979, 1 million homes have gone from the rented sector, half of them from the private rented sector—more than the number of homes destroyed by Hitler's bombs. All right, the homes about which I am talking have not been destroyed, but they have gone from the rented sector. But the Government say that since 1980 and the introduction of short lets and technical changes in the Rent Acts, this sector is supposed to be reviving.

There is another issue that gives the lie to this crazy theory. More than half the lets in London are outside Rent Act controls, and the bottom is still dropping out of the market. The Government believe that if rents are increased the problem will be solved. But I have already said that people on an average income of £90 a week pay £27 in rent.

[Mr. Soley]

The Association of District Councils—I am glad to have such bodies on my side—agrees that market rents are unlikely to revive the rented sector. So much for the belief of the Secretary of State that the Conservative party is on his side. It is not, and Rural Voice does not believe him either. Rural Voice operates council houses throughout Britain, which is how it knows what is happening. People forget that Mr. Rachman was not "just", as some say, a bad landlord. He was a property developer. He wanted to get people out so that he could sell the properties. That should tell the Government a lot about how they handle the Bill. They have introduced some limited protection against eviction and harassment in part IV. If one reads the small print, one recognises that to ensure that a court issues a possession order, allowing possession to go ahead, the landlord merely has to offer "suitable alternative accommodation". There will be arguments about what is "suitable". The landlord might say, "Sorry, but you must move. You might have had a garden before, but we shall move you first to this two-roomed flat. When we have moved you, perhaps we will move you to a one-roomed flat." People will again go through the agonies of the 1950s period, and that is why I ask the Liberal party to think again about the wording of its amendment.

It has always been notoriously difficult to prove harassment and illegal eviction. That is why I draw the attention of the House to the fact that Mr. Rachman was never convicted of any offence.

Mr. Winnick: On existing regulated tenancies, does there not remain an incentive to get tenants out? Even if accommodation is not sold with vacant possession, it can be relet at market rents. Even if laws preventing harassment are brought into effect—there is a question mark over how effective they will be—nine times out of 10 the tenant who has been forced out will not be reinstated.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as I hope is the House, because he has saved me from making one of my points. My hon. Friend is right.

On 19 May, in the statement I have already quoted, the Secretary of State said that we need tough summary sanctions. One need not be a lawyer to recognise that the words uttered by Secretary of State during the heat and intensity of a general election campaign have now changed. It is no longer tough summary sanctions—it is all sorts of woolly, cloudy issues that must be proved in a court of law. The landlord will almost certainly have a very capable lawyer, properly funded—just as they have been in the past—yet there will be no real certainty that the tenant can fight back effectively.

The Government's survey—and I ask the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) to pay attention to this — of privately owned empty properties found that only 2 per cent. of owners said that they were empty because of the Rent Acts. Are they kidding themselves; are they all wrong?

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a substantial number of people in other countries live in private rented accommodation? Do they not also face the same percentage of bad landlords?

Mr. Soley: I am coming to precisely that point. The hon. Gentleman knows that the problem lies with housing finance. Someone who owns a house worth £50,000 can sell it, put the money in a building society as a relatively safe investment and, without too much effort, receive about £100 a week in interest—all without the hassle of being a landlord. If a house is worth £100,000—nearer the mark in London — the interest would be £200 a week. We do not need to be great mathematicians to work out the level to which rents must rise simply to break even with the return on investment in a building society. Someone who owns a house worth £50,000 must receive a rent of at least £100 a week to break even. In fact, it will probably be more than that because the owner will increase the rent slightly and then sell the house after three or four years. However, for the owner to realise his money in a house, he must have vacant possession. He will have to winkle out his tenants.

There is another way to make a profit from renting —to go up market and rent to the really high income groups. That will certainly happen. Yet another way would be to pack a great many people into a property. An elderly man came to see me at my advice surgery about nine months ago. He was paying £70 a week for accommodation and breakfast in a café down the road. He was sharing a room with three other people. That is why we say that already half the rented property is outside the Rent Acts and there will be more such cases——

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that it has not escaped the hon. Gentleman's attention that that lamentable case is a result of the present laws.

Mr. Soley: I can tell the Minister the cause — it is because that sort of rental falls outwith the Rent Acts. It is also caused by the housing crisis.

The man who came to see me, although elderly, was not old enough to fall into a category eligible for local authority help. I wanted to take up his case, but he would not allow that because he was afraid of losing what he had. There were no controls to help him and I could not offer him alternative housing. Why not? It was because the Government have cut the public housing sector by two thirds since 1979.

The Duke of Edinburgh's report, that of the Church of England — "Faith in the City" — and just about every independent housing expert have stated clearly that we must reform the housing finance system. If I have God and the royal family on my side, the Tory party should be worried. I repeat my offer to the Government—we will talk with them about all aspects of housing finance and help them to get the necessary policy through the House, subject to two conditions. First, any new or reformed system must be fairer both within the rented and purchase systems and between the two systems. Secondly, any such system must not cause either rent or mortgage payers economic distress.

The Government, through their combined assaults on housing benefit and rents—brought about by their cuts in grants to local authorities—have thrown almost every rent payer into financial crisis. In addition, every time that there has been an increase in the mortgage interest rate and every time that there has been a dramatic increase in unemployment, mortgage payers have been caused economic distress. At the same time, the Government have managed to distort the housing market out of all proportion to its previous state.

The proposal to restructure housing association finance will break up a system that has commanded all-party support. The original legislation was introduced by a Labour Government, but some of the thinking had already been done during the 1970-74 Tory Government. When the Labour party introduced legislation—albeit with amendments—it received a considerable measure of support from Conservative Members.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My recollection is that Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, introduced the policy in 1963, and made £3 million available to implement it.

Mr. Soley: The key Act — the 1974 Act — was introduced—*[Interruption.]* I am right; hon. Members can check it for themselves.

Sir Hugh Rossi: It started in the 1960s.

Mr. Soley: I do not dispute that the housing association movement started in the 1960s. At that time, a number of people felt that there was a need for another layer of housing provision. It was a Labour Government who recognised that the policy needed regulating and the establishment of certain basic standards, and those were introduced——

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman must surely be aware that the 1974 Act was introduced by a Conservative Government. Indeed, I was the Under-Secretary of State who dealt with it on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman cannot be thinking of the same Act. He obviously does not know the facts. He should go away now and check. He has the time.

The Housing Act 1974 allowed the Labour Government to introduce between 250,000 and 300,000 new tenancies. It was a Labour Government's Act, which received considerable support from the Tory party. Yet this Conservative Government now wish to introduce private finance, at a fixed level for each area, within a range of 30 per cent. to 70 per cent. As with the private sector, housing associations will be pushed up-market and will be less able to provide low-cost rented accommodation to people in need. That is why the National Federation of Housing Associations is deeply concerned that rents will have to rise dramatically.

The alternative — and there is one — is to increase housing benefit. Of course, the Government say, "Don't worry about rent increases because housing benefit will rise to meet them." Yet this Government have cut housing benefit seven times and — as we were told by the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled a few days ago — intend to cut it again in April by £640 million, which will make 5 million families worse off. The Government might say, "No problem, we will increase housing benefit", but there is no sign that they will actually do so.

I want to ask the Secretary of State a question, and will happily give way to him so that he can answer it immediately. What proportion of a person's net income should be paid in rent? Will the right hon. Gentleman answer that question now? It is obvious that he will not. Will he, therefore, say whether the Government are prepared to raise housing benefit, regardless of the levels to which rents rise under the free market system? Let him answer that.

Mr. Ridley: I can answer that question. The answer is yes, subject to the three provisos that I made in my speech. The hon. Gentleman would agree that if a tenant and a landlord got together and connived to double the rent in order to get the whole of it repaid in housing benefit, he would be against it. He agrees with that, I hope. Does he really think that housing benefit should be available to people who rent flats in Eaton square? No. Does he think that a single person should be put in a four-bedroomed house? No. So presumably he agrees with the provisos that we put in the Bill.

Mr. Soley: I am even more convinced of the Secretary of State's ignorance on housing matters. For a start, any of the provisos that he has mentioned could be applied, if one does not approve of subsidy, to the mortgage income tax relief system. What is the difference? Are we going to have a rent assessment committee rushing round and checking up on the £4·5 billion a year that goes into mortgage income tax relief, of which virtually one-quarter goes to those who earn over £20,000 a year? Is the Secretary of State suggesting that we now ought to check up on all those people receiving that level of mortgage income tax relief on that sort of salary?

I will come back in a moment to the issue of what happens to the person who will have to move out of a flat that is considered too large. The Government cannot give that assurance, not least because of that mean little provision in this Bill, clause 106, which gives an additional function to rent officers of deciding whether a person's accommodation is too large or too small. What will happen when somebody's parents die, and the rent officer finds that a house which previously had three occupants now has only one? The housing benefit level will be too high, according to the Secretary of State. We cannot have one person occupying a three-or four-bedroomed house, as he has just indicated. These people will either have to move or lose their housing benefit. That is what will happen. That is why this system is so evil and pernicious. I shall be interested to see whether the rent assessment officer goes round to see whether the Secretary of State's house is too big, if, perhaps, he was given a little too much tax rebate when receiving mortgage income tax relief, but I do not think it will happen.

We shall see a situation which has already begun to appear. A trainee nurse will have to pay 37 per cent. of her salary in rent before qualifying for housing benefit. A qualified nurse will have to pay 48 per cent. of her net salary before she becomes eligible for housing benefit. A painter and decorator aged 35, with a wife and two children, a take-home pay of £169 a week net and a child benefit of £14·50 a week, will not qualify for housing benefit on a rent below £64·80 a week. That is 34 per cent. of his income. A pensioner couple with an occupational pension—beloved by the Government—and a total net weekly income of £106·25 will not qualify for housing benefit on rents of less than £28·81 a week, 27 per cent. of their income. If he cannot answer the other questions adequately, will the Secretary of State tell us whether he thinks that those levels, which will come into being in April next year, are acceptable? Let him give us an answer. There is no answer, so presumably they are acceptable.

Perhaps the Secretary of State and his hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green think it too low, think that landlords are not getting enough money so they have to have more. Is it too low, is it about right or will it go up even further? We do not seem to be given an answer to that one either.

[Mr. Soley]

Whatever happened to the assured tenancies? That is the other big change. If it was a criminal offence in Britain to abuse the English language, the Secretary of State would have been hanged, drawn and quartered years ago. What he does to the English language is criminal. Assured tenancies were introduced with the idea that they would be approved by the Secretary of State or his Department. That assurance has gone. Assured tenancies are no longer assured. Yet the previous Housing Minister, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), said that we would have responsible landlords assured by a system of registration. That was the commitment of a previous Housing Minister. That too has gone. An assured tenancy is, in fact, an insecure high-rent tenancy and a shorthold assured tenancy is an insecure short let. There can be no consensus between the political parties on such a policy. We all know from reading the Bill that security of tenure has gone, not least because of the introduction of the concept of statutory periodic tenancy, which puts so many of the cards in a landlord's hands. The terms of the rent assessment committee are not binding and the landlord can too easily change the terms through the statutory periodic tenancy.

Can hon. Members recall another great promise made by the Government to the effect that there would be continuity of tenancy? It meant that if one was looking after an elderly relative, one could stay on safely. That has gone. The elderly relative is dead and the landlord can say that the circumstances have changed. He can change the tenancy and tell the tenant to go. There is no guarantee of inheriting a family tenancy after caring for aged relatives or something of the kind. Another promise is broken.

So the Secretary of State falls back on housing action trusts. Here is the cutting edge, but it is also the edge where the double standards come in. No veto for tenants here: they have no vote but they will be "listened to". If the consultation exercise on this Bill is anything to go by, tenants will have to be quick or it will pass them by while they are drinking a cup of tea. Ratepayers may even have to pay for the establishment of a housing action trust. That is the Government who were talking earlier this afternoon about spendthrift local authorities. They will now ask ratepayers in certain circumstances to pay to have their housing taken away from them and to have certain planning and public health powers taken away too. I pray in aid the Association of District Councils.

The housing action trust members will be paid, so ratepayers will presumably have to subsidise them. Yet if a person is on a housing association, not only is he not paid but there must not be a conflict of interest. There is nothing in here about a conflict of interests. Are we sure that we will not have estate agents on the housing action trusts? Can we be sure? I doubt it.

Clause 59 defines the objectives of the housing action trust, of which diversified tenures is one. No local authority tenants—they are not allowed. They are not fit people, apparently. No homeless people at all. What did the Government say on that? The consultation document said that it would not be appropriate for homeless people because that would distract it from its regenerative function. "To hell with the people, let us get our hands on the buildings and then move others in, rather like we have done in Wandsworth and Westminster."

The plum, the so-called jewel in the crown, is the tenant's right to choose a landlord. Labour local authorities have been allowing tenants to choose landlords for years. The difference is that they gave a veto to tenants and stipulated that the landlord must be socially responsible. That again is worthy of a little quotation from the Association of District Councils because what it says is:

> "Ballot procedures should not be weighted against a local authority. The Association does not consider the present provisions of the Bill to be even-handed."

Why not? The Minister let it slip when opening the debate. Over 50 per cent. of the people must vote against before a takeover can be rejected. If we tried that in voting for industrial action, we would be down at the High Court before we could say "ballot box". It means that if 50 per cent. of the people vote against, with the other 50 per cent. either voting in favour or not voting at all, it can still go through. It is an iniquitous system and one which a number of others have recognised as wrong.

Above all, why is there no right for private tenants to opt out? According to independent surveys, 89 per cent. of local authority tenants regard their landlords as satisfactory compared with 82 per cent. of private tenants. Yet the Bill allows only local authority tenants to opt out if they do not like their landlord. Private tenants will have no such right. Moreover, tenants who opt out will not be allowed to change their minds; if they find themselves with a bad landlord as a result, they will be stuck with the situation.

The right to choose must be put into perspective. It should be on the basis of good and bad landlords, regardless of whether they are public or private, Labour, Conservative, Liberal, or whatever.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend is making a first-class speech, but what makes him think that tenants will have a vote? The Bill uses the word "signified", so if 51 per cent. do not write in to say no they may be deemed to have said yes.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The White Paper refers to voting, but my hon. Friend may well be right. Knowing the Government's record, we shall have to examine the small print very carefully in Committee.

The Government should be making a major effort to give tenants real rights, whether they be in the public or the private sector, because tenants have the right to a good service. The guts of the matter is that the Secretary of State is basically against public sector housing and local democracy and, like the Government, shows utter contempt for them. The Government talk about the number of empty council properties, but only 2·3 per cent. of local authority housing stock is empty compared with 3·8 per cent. of housing association properties and 4·2 per cent. in the private sector. Moreover, the worst offenders of all are the Secretary of State and the Government, with 6·9 per cent. of Government-owned properties lying empty.

I will give just two examples. The Metropolitan police have 3,203 properties in London, of which 573 are empty. Around Wormwood Scrubs prison there are a number of flats and houses, some of them beautiful Victorian cottages. Those properties have been empty for four years and some of the flats for nine years. The cottages would sell for at least £150,000, but the whole lot—occupied or unoccupied — are to be bulldozed to make way for

prison car parking and landscaping. That is a marvellous statement of the Government's priorities in an area in which the housing waiting list has risen to 10,000 people, 500 of them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, since the Government came to office. The truth is that, along with the mess that the Government have made of housing finance, by cutting back so much on housing benefit they have devastated public sector building. In just five years, there was a cut of two thirds, from 94,000 completions in 1980 to only 33,000 in 1985. Even if the Government's policies were reversed tomorrow morning, it would take five or 10 years to get back to the situation in 1979.

There can be no revival without a balanced housing policy. The building industry, local authorities and housing associations must be able to plan ahead, but at present that is impossible. With the Government's investment policy, not even private investors can plan ahead when they have seen the Government cut housing benefit seven times. The misery that people face, in rural and urban areas alike, but especially in the inner cities —as seen on television at Christmas when the churches go round the hostels doing their good work — is dramatically and horribly worse as a result of seven or eight years of the Government's crazy, ideologically oriented policies and, tragically, it can only get even worse.

5.44 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has told the House that his party is implacably opposed to the provisions of the Bill. He warned the House and the country that there could be no consensus between the two sides of the House on the basis of the Bill, but the House ought not to take that too seriously. Like many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I remember the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) opposing the right to buy which is enshrined in the Housing Act 1980. Time and again, the Labour party said that it opposed giving local authority tenants the right to buy, but eventually it followed where my right hon. Friends had led and today even the Labour party does not propose to repeal the right of tenants to buy their own houses.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I am mindful of what Mr. Speaker has said about the need for short speeches.

Mr. Roberts: When compulsory council house sales were introduced eight years ago, the basis of the Labour party's opposition and my own was the belief that if council houses were sold at a discount the best would be sold off and local authorities would be left with the worst. That has already happened. One cannot oppose the selling off of what has already been sold.

Mr. Gow: Clearly it was a mistake to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

My point is illustrated by what happened in the general election of 1983, when the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was leader of the Labour party. The Labour manifesto of June 1983 contained a promise to repeal the right to buy, but there was no such promise in the Labour manifesto in June 1987. I predict that precisely the same change will take place in relation to our proposals to give public sector tenants the right to choose their landlords.

Mr. Soley: What about private tenants?

Mr. Gow: Twenty-eight years ago yesterday, I travelled from London to Blackpool to attend the post-general election defeat conference of the Labour party and to hear what turned out to be the last great speech of the predecessor of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent — Mr. Aneurin Bevan. His words made a deep impression on my mind. As I recall it, his message was as follows: "You really cannot go before the country with a programme and tell the country that you think the programme is good for the country and immediately the country has rejected it say that you would like to alter it. It won't work. It isn't right. It is almost like saying that you put before the country a false prospectus. The programme we put before the country we believed in. We are very sorry that the electorate rejected it. We think that the electorate is going to be sorry for having rejected it. In the course of time, as years go by, as circumstances change and the issues are altered, we may find it necessary to change some part of the programme. That will not be because we thought the programme was wrong but simply because we think that it might be adjusted to altered circumstances."

The Labour party is busily engaged in disregarding the advice that was given to it 28 years ago by one of its heroes, to whom its present leader unveiled a statue in Ebbw Vale earlier this month. I remind the Labour party of the undesirability of changing policy because one finds that it is unpopular, which is what the Labour party has done on housing policy.

I make it clear to my right hon. Friend that I welcome most warmly the proposals in the Bill. Unlike Opposition Members, I welcome especially the right that we are giving to local authority tenants to change their landlords. On the basis of figures that I think were entirely spurious, the hon. Member for Hammersmith claimed that almost all local authority tenants are satisfied with their landlords. I advise the hon. Gentleman that, alas, that is simply not the case. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about the private sector?"] I am dealing at the moment with the public sector. I advise the hon. Gentleman that if he were to visit council tenants in London, whether they lived in houses or flats, and made his own survey, asking whether those tenants were content with their landlords, I am afraid that the reply would be depressing. Indeed, the reply would not have allowed him to make the assertion that he did earlier.

I welcome that provision without reservation. It is a further development of our policy. Successive Governments used to believe that the criterion by which their housing policy should be judged was the number of houses and flats that they had built for letting in the public sector in perpetuity. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister became leader of the Conservative party, she altered our housing policy to give tenants a choice. We are now extending that choice, and that is to be warmly welcomed.

I turn from the extension of choice so far as landlords are concerned to the private rented sector. My right hon. Friend's proposals do not go far enough. With the assured tenancy scheme, even under my right hon. Friend's proposals there will still be security of tenure. With the shorthold scheme, it will still be possible for a tenant to go to the rent officer and ultimately to the rent assessment committee to fix his rent. The desirable objectives of bringing into use accommodation that at present is not in

[Mr. Gow]

use or is under-used, of attracting new investment into building, and converting private accommodation for rent would be better served if we had said that from the date on which the Bill comes into force all future lettings will be at a rent and for a term as agreed between landlord and tenant. Although my right hon. Friend's proposals are a giant step forward, he may regard them as being only a stage towards the desirable objective of allowing landlords and tenants to agree on the rent and terms of their tenancies.

In the White Paper, my right hon. Friend proposed to abolish the cost floor and he has explained in his speech the reason why the Bill does not contain proposals to do so. I doubt whether it would be wise to abolish the cost floor in its entirety. The present cut-off date is 31 March 1974. It would be reasonable to make that date much later, but from a public finance stance it would be unjustified to abolish it entirely. Let us suppose that a new council house is built today at a cost of £50,000 and that a tenant moves in who has been a public sector tenant for 30 years. That tenant would be able to exercise the right to buy at a 60 per cent. discount and to buy for £20,000 a house that had cost the public sector £50,000. It would be right to advance the date of the cost floor and wrong to abolish it altogether.

My final point relates to the role of the district valuer. The district valuer is mentioned in the Bill, but there is an omission. At present, when a tenant wishes to exercise the right to buy, it is frequently the practice of the local authority to ask the district valuer at that stage his opinion of the open market value of the house or flat. If the prospective purchaser disagrees with the value placed on the house or flat by the local authority, which in the situation that I have described would have been made by the district valuer, the aggrieved would-be purchaser has the right to appeal but only to the district valuer, the very person whom the local authority asked for advice initially about the value of the house.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning replies he will assure the House that the Bill will include a provision that henceforward, if local authorities need advice — which, of course, they frequently do—before fixing the value of a house or flat which is subject to the right to buy, they should take advice from the private sector, so that there can be a genuine appellate procedure to the district valuer.

I repeat my welcome for my right hon. Friend's Bill and wish it a speedy passage through Parliament. I urge my right hon. Friend not to take too seriously the Labour party's temporary opposition to this excellent measure.

5.57 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I should like to make just one point about the speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). He must know that some of us have always taken the view, and continue to take the view, that the sale of council houses, especially in areas of great need, was wrong and continues to be wrong. Although the sale of council houses was included in my party's manifesto for the previous general election, I should stress that I have never agreed with that.

Areas such as mine have terrible problems and our people have great need of homes and houses. In such areas, the sale of council houses simply removes houses from the public sector and people who need homes are denied them. It may not be the case in parts of the south and in London, although I am certain that even in London there are problems regarding the sale of some houses, but when one goes round council estates in areas of high unemployment such as my area, it is terrible to see council houses up for sale when nobody can afford to buy them. Yet at the same time we have an increasing list of people in need of housing.

I declare an interest as a member of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians. I am a building worker by trade. When I was genuinely working for a living, creating rather than talking, I was a carpenter and joiner. I know about housing problems because when I was married at the end of the war I lived for 12 years in rooms. To begin with we lived with my parents, then with my wife's relatives and then in rooms.

Mr. Winnick: Did they not have a house to spare?

Mr. Heffer: They certainly did not have a house to spare and I did not know anybody with houses to spare. I know what happens. Two ladies share a kitchen or two families a bathroom. That causes tensions and terrible problems can arise. We got a home only through both of us working for years and saving a little money for a deposit to get a mortgage. Then I discovered I had an even bigger debt. When I came to the House I owed as much on the mortgage as when I first borrowed it nearly 19 years previously.

It always amazes me that we seem to ignore realities. The Bill does not touch on what people are suffering, nor does it help them to deal with their problems. That is what worries me about these debates. Will the Bill provide even one additional home?

Mr. Gow: Yes.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman was the Minister for Housing and for a while I shadowed him. He knows that despite all the assurances that we have have had from the Government since the day they came to office, for most of our people—I am not talking about those with houses to spare — problems such as overcrowding have got worse and lists have got longer. The Government want to remove public ownership, but the only real answer to housing needs is the development of local authority ownership and building.

Earlier, we talked about rural areas. I was born and bred, not in a great urban area, but in a rural area, and I know about ordinary working people living in nice thatched cottages because I went into such homes and saw dirty floors, the lack of bathrooms and the lavvy at the end of the garden. How did people escape from that? Local authorities provided them with decent homes; no one else did. Private entrepreneurs did not come along and say, "There is a need for homes. We shall build them." There was nothing of the sort.

The Labour party has a proud record on housing. It goes back to the days of the greatest Minister with responsibility for housing, John Wheatley, and the first minority Labour Government. He was a crackpot Left-winger, like me, and a Roman Catholic. I am an Anglo-Catholic, but he was a Christian, like me. He was deeply concerned about the needs of ordinary working people and he introduced the Bill that began the process. I do not deny that a Conservative Government started building some

council houses, but the process got off the ground under a Labour Government. That was the beginning of local authority housing.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): We built more then than now.

Mr. Heffer: That is absolutely true. The position is deteriorating. Only a few houses are being built now compared with the many built by the Labour party in Liverpool in opposition to the Government. If those are not included in the figure, one sees that practically none are being built by local authorities. That is terrible.

I agree with the Secretary of State on one point. Some Conservative Members have rightly pointed out that many big local authorities have not given their tenants a square deal. I do not deny that. Even in the same local authority decent houses are looked after well because tenants have an interest in keeping their gardens well and so on, but in multi-storey blocks of three or four storeys it is a different scene. Instead of talking about handing housing over to private enterprise, we should be deciding to pull down all the multi-storey blocks in every area and to replace them with nice semi-detached houses with proper facilities.

We could learn from Liverpool city council. Although this will take a few minutes, I should like to read to the House its list of principles in developing rented housing. The document states:

"*Location*

All developments must be located in satisfactory long term housing areas, and on sites which meet the overall housing objectives of the Council. In particular, sites should be contributing to the implementation of intensive action programmes, and should be meeting the demands from needs groups identified by the Council.

Layout"—

this is important—

"The following principles shall apply to all developments.

All developments should be of houses and bungalows.

Normally they should be built in small developments, in many cases larger sites would have to be sub-divided.

Through streets should be provided wherever possible rather than cul-de-sacs.

There should be no clusters of dwellings.

Wherever possible dwellings should be faced onto already existing roads to avoid a canyon effect.

Wherever possible developments should be semi-detached.

Where terraces are provided they should be in short streets without back alleys and parking should be provided within the curtilage.

The layout of a development should have a conventional road and pavement lay-out with front access to dwellings and no pedestrian/vehicular separation.

Communal open spaces and play areas should be provided, within the development.

Whenever sheltered accommodation is provided, it should be of two storeys only."

That is what needs to be done. That is the right way to tackle housing. During the general election, Michael White of *The Guardian* happened to come to my constituency. He came round with me while I was canvassing and that sort of thing. If I remember rightly. I believe that he referred to that visit as "going to Gorky" because I had been somewhat banished in those days. He looked at the new housing built by the local authority and the private housing close to it in different parts of my constituency. He said, "The great thing, Eric, is that you cannot tell the difference." Precisely.

In the past we went wrong. When I was on the council in Liverpool—during most of that time the Tory party was in power—we got more subsidies and more support if we built high-rise flats. That is the truth of the matter. We built those high-rise flats and the Government housing figures went up. Macmillan was able to come to the House and boast about the numbers that had been built. It was disastrous. The Government were wrong and the local authorities were wrong for accepting such a policy—we were all wrong.

Now we must get rid of such high-rise flats and do the sort of thing that that wicked Liverpool council, which is now being surcharged and whose councillors have lost their positions, has done. I am glad to say that that housing policy is being continued by the existing local authority, but, unfortunately, again without any assistance from this Government. It would be lovely if the Prime Minister and the other Ministers came to the area and forgot all their prejudices, looked at what has been done and recognised that it is not private enterprise that needs to do it. The local authorities can get things done provided they tackle it in the right way. It is true that housing management has not always been carried out in the right way. We can learn from our mistakes. It does not mean that we have to go along the road suggested by the Government.

One point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) which I had not picked up before and which scared the daylights out of me concerned clause 106. That clause immediately made me think of my mother-in-law, who is 83 years of age. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) may smile, but it is no joke. I am talking about real people. My mother-in-law brought up four children, one of whom is now a university lecturer. He came from a council estate and he has a PhD and so on. What will happen to that old lady who now lives on her own? In the future she may be told that her house is too big for her and that she ought to move. My brothers-in-law have asked her to live with them and I have asked her to live with us, but she does not want to. She wants to live on her own as long as she can get around and do the things that she wants to do. She wants to live in the house in which she brought up her family. If such housing goes over to private enterprise or is forced into private enterprise, will someone come along and say, "The accommodation is too big. Out you get."? Will that sort of uncertainty hang over the heads of ordinary people? If that is so, it is the worst part of all that is in the Bill. Just about everything else about the Bill is bad anyway.

Another thing that is important concerns what will happen if tenants ask for their properties to be taken over by landlords. Let us consider what the brief from Shelter had to say. Perhaps the Minister will get up at the end of the debate and say that Shelter is wrong, give us that assurance and write it into the Bill. That brief says:

"Safeguards for tenants are inadequate. For example, the voting system, which will determine the outcome of any take over proposal. The proposal of a prospective landlord will go through unless at least 51 per cent. of the tenants log a specific objection. On an estate with 1,000 properties 501 tenants will have to lodge individual objections in this period. There is no 'ballot' as such and it is not at all clear what would happen if you were on holiday at the time! Objections will be lodged with the new 'landlords', i.e. there is no mechanism for ensuring that even those tenants who understand how to log an objection can be sure that their objection has been counted."

Is that true? If so, it is in line with what was said in the White Paper, which stated that the basic objective of the Government is to:

"introduce arrangements to allow council tenants to choose to transfer to other landlords".

[Mr. Heffer]

It then went on to make clear that what the Government want to do is to diminish local authority ownership. That is the key to the Bill. They wish to make sure that local authorities do not have any role in housing. They want to hand it over to private enterprise by one means or another. In other words, the Government will be helping their friends to make even more profits out of the people than in the past. That is the reality. That is what the Bill is all about.

What happens if such properties are handed over to private local landlords? We have all had experience of such matters. I am sure that Conservative Members, especially those who represent large cities, will accept that they have had constituents, who live in private rented properties, coming along with a problem. If those constituents do not do so they are certainly different from the constituents of Liverpool, Manchester or elsewhere. In the past, my constituents have come along to me and said, "For the past two years I have been asking my landlord to do such and such a repair. It is not a very big repair, but I am getting on in life and I cannot do it myself." Those private landlords have failed to do that repair. In such cases we have had to go to the local health authority to put pressure on those landlords to do the job. In fact, that process is not as good as it used to be because we cannot get those jobs done compulsorily and charged to the landlord as we could in the old days.

If properties are handed over to local landlords, will there be a guarantee that they will get repairs done? Local authorities may not get repairs done as quickly as they ought, but those repairs do get done. Indeed, they are carried out by proper craftsmen. Local authorities employ proper craftsmen and also employ young apprentices to help those people. However, in the main, private landlords employ cowboy outfits. Sometimes, after they have been to do the repair, the situation is worse than it was before.

I ask my hon. Friends—they will do so anyway—to oppose this Bill line by line, bit by bit. However, I also plead that, in the process, they do not allow the Government to keep making the agenda. I hope that we will not, once again, give way on the Government's housing policies. When it comes down to it, over the years, the Labour party's policies have proved to be the right policies. They have proved good for the mass of ordinary people. Let us get back to those policies. We must say to the Government that when they go out and we come in again we shall restore to local authorities the right to build homes for the needy in the way that we did in the past.

6.18 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech in this debate on one of the most important Bills of the present Parliament.

At the outset may I say, as a new Member, how much I recognised the sincerity and passion with which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) spoke. May I also say how much we regret the fact that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was unable to open for the Opposition this afternoon because of an accident.

It is a pleasure to pay tribute to my predecessor in the Taunton division of Somerset, Sir Edward du Cann. It is unnecessary for me to remind the House of his great services to it as the founder and chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, as a member and Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and as the chairman, for nigh on 13 years, of the 1922 Committee of Conservative Back-Bench Members. He is a good example of someone who has attained the highest distinction and service in the House without, in recent years at least, having served on either Front Bench.

But the principal tribute to Edward comes from his constituency. No words of mine could appropriately describe the great affection in which Edward and Sallie du Cann are held in Taunton, and the gratitude and respect for his 31 years of service to his constituents. Often, the older and poorer constituents—many of whom may not have voted for him—paid the most vigorous tribute to his assiduous work on their behalf. It is sobering for a new candidate to be told at such length on so many doorsteps how highly the constituents valued his predecessor's work and how much they expected of him. This was said in broad Somerset accents which I, as a Lancastrian, will not confuse the House by attempting to quote.

The Taunton division of Somerset resembles in shape, although not in size, a tadpole. The head—the centre of the population — is on the east side, and the tail stretches to the highest point of Exmoor. Of my electors, 71,000 live in the borough of Taunton Deane and only 4,000 live in the wide, sparsely populated area of west Somerset, the responsibility for representing which I share with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Taunton is without doubt the most beautiful and varied constituency that it is possible to represent. There is Taunton itself and Wellington, a most elegant small town which has been through difficulties in recent years with manufacturing industry but which now faces the future with great confidence. Two other small towns are Wiveliscombe and Dulverton, and there is a host of villages with glorious names such as Bishops Lydeard, Hatch Beauchamp, North Curry, and Combe Florey—the home of Evelyn, and now of Auberon, Waugh.

The foundation of my constituency's prosperity was agriculture and wool. The communal and individual fortunes made in the 14th and 15th centuries led to the skyline of Taunton Deane being studded with splendid church towers which are typical of that period. Some of their interiors were not enhanced by Victorian modernisers, but our parish church of St. Nicholas, Brushford, not only retains a 15th century screen, but has a 20th century side chapel designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who was the grandfather of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Within the side chapel lie the tomb and effigy of a modern knight recumbent with puttees and pith helmet. That is Aubrey Herbert, "the man who was Greenmantle" and sometime Conservative Member of this House for the Yeovil division, now temporarily in partibus infidelibus. Some hon. Members will be aware that Aubrey Herbert spent much of his time in the Balkans and was known as the "uncrowned king of Albania."

To this day, agriculture remains important—dairying, beef and sheep on Exmoor. I hope to contribute to future agricultural debates, Mr. Speaker, if I succeed in catching your eye.

Taunton is a growth point. It attracts a mixture of industry and people from all parts of the country. This, and its comparatively low and falling unemployment, is

due to the expansion of retail, commercial, professional and high-tech business, especially close to the M5 motorway or on the many industrial estates. Those developments have implications for housing, which is the subject of this debate. Indeed, last Thursday, today and tomorrow the House is debating the three issues which were most important to my constituents during the recent general election campaign and which remain important —health, housing and education. Each of those issues is concerned with meeting social requirements by the provision of adequate resources, the efficient use of those resources and effective partnership between the public and private sectors.

I welcome the Bill for two reasons. First, it is long-awaited. It is vital to the revival of the privately rented sector, the efficient use of our housing stock and the encouragement of geographical mobility of the labour force. Almost precisely 20 years ago, when I was a civil servant at the Department of Employment, I was the secretary of a small group which examined the geographical mobility of workers. That was at a time when we had 600,000 people unemployed and a much more rigid economy than we have now. There has been very little movement during those 20 years.

My second reason is that the Bill has been pioneered largely by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning. He has been a personal friend for about 22 years, and his family home is in the historic county of Somerset, which is now, alas — the House will understand my use of a French revolutionary administrative expression—in the département of Avon. I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning and my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who is now a Minister of State at the Home Office, in developing and designing the proposals contained in the Bill.

I am glad to have the assurance of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the best local authorities will continue to play a significant role in housing provision and organisation. Taunton Deane borough council vigorously supports the right-to-buy legislation and has sold 2,200 homes from a total stock of 10,700. However, nearly 40 per cent. of the letters that I receive relate to housing issues —mainly the housing or rehousing of people in some need. I pay tribute to the supremely civilised and efficient way in which Taunton Deane council tries to extract a quart from a pint pot. The high standards that it establishes will set high standards for the private sector, which will need to compete. I know that Taunton Deane works and will work closely with the housing association movement.

In west Somerset, there are special problems with a sparsely populated rural area, low-paid residents and house prices being forced up by the purchase of retirement and second homes. That problem was well expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Taunton Deane and West Somerset councils were alarmed by the cost floor proposals in the White Paper, and I was pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that the Government may reconsider this. I hope so, because it goes against the long-established local government tradition that an asset must not be sold for less than its value.

I commend the Bill to the House, but I add this. It is the highest honour and duty to which an Englishman—a British citizen—can aspire to be a Member of this House. That honour and duty carry with them the obligation to further the interests of one's constituents and to use one's judgment on the great issues of the day. Sometimes, the furtherance of those interests and the exercise of that judgment will not be entirely convenient to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, but I hope that this and future contributions from me will find merit and favour in the House.

6.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"This House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, although it increases legal protection for private sector tenants from harassment by landlords, extends the role of housing associations ad increases their opportunity to obtain finance from the private sector, and gives an opportunity for some council tenants to choose to change their landlords, does not address the scandal of the record high level of homelessness in Britain, will disadvantage tenants in the housing association and private rented sectors by causing higher rents through phasing out of the Rent Acts without guaranteeing adequate income support for many on low or modest incomes, will undermine local democracy through the establishment of Housing Action Trusts that are not accountable to local voters, and will not provide for the increase in public investment in housing needed to help to ensure dry, well-maintained and affordable homes for all."

Before addressing the Bill, may I welcome the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and thank him for his contribution—in particular for his generous tribute to his long-serving and greatly respected predecessor. All hon. Members greatly respected someone who often made being a Back Bencher a far more eminent position than that of a Front Bencher. The predecessor of the hon. Member for Taunton served, as he rightly said, long before I and many other hon. Members came to the House, but he set a standard that the House follows, and will follow, for many years. He was certainly one of the great contributors, and, clearly, the new hon. Member for Taunton will try to follow in that tradition of independence and respect for the constituents whom he serves.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman especially because he represents the other England. His constituency and mine are about as far apart in type as one could imagine. His is a rural, cider-drinking, agricultural, sun-filled Somerset constituency——

Mr. Soley: They do not drink much cider in Bermondsey.

Mr. Hughes: Indeed not.

My constituency, on the other hand, is an inner-city area that suffered in the blitz and has been rebuilt. I guess, although I have not checked, that the percentages of private and public housing are probably mirror images in the two constituencies, too. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us in contributing to the patchwork of debate here, to ensure that legislation produced by any Government is improved by the contributions of Back Benchers and Members of other parties. The hon. Gentleman may have immediately earned his reward from this debate by finding himself nominated to serve on the Committee that considers the Bill, thereby earning his spurs.

Housing is as much as ever a crucial issue for Britain in 1987. Britain has two fundamental housing needs upon

[Mr. Hughes]

which I hope that we all agree. The first is the need for increased investment to keep our housing stock in the state in which it should be; and the second—perhaps more dramatic and unusual — is to meet the exceptional amount of homelessness in our country. Never before have so many people presented themselves as homeless. To be without a home is to be deprived of one's most fundamental right, and that is something that we should try to address.

One must wonder about how certain the Government are of their way forward, given the fits and starts that accompanied the introduction of the Bill. The consultation period was not finished—in some respects—before the Bill was published. One of the dates by which responses were sought was 4 December and we ain't there yet. Secondly, this is a Bill that perhaps should or should not have been published in whole or in part and that had to be republished. When it was published, we saw that it had not apparently taken into account any of the responses made on many of the issues that resulted from consultation. On most issues, the proposals in the Bill are identical to what was proposed in the White Paper, and in consultation papers after that.

The Bill's strategy is to try to deal with the housing problems perceived by the Government in a way that I believe all Opposition parties consider wrong. The Government have chosen to make empty properties available by raising rents, which is a strategy that will inevitably increase, rather than decrease, homelessness. Tenants moving from fair-rent tenancies will have no choice but to go to open-market rent tenancies, to use the Government's phrase, instead of enjoying fair and affordable rents. That means that, with some exceptions, people will have to pay more, and some will not be able to afford it.

When I intervened to ask the Secretary of State a question during his opening speech, he spoke of those who will be covered by housing benefit, and entered three provisos. I accept that his statement about those who are covered by housing benefit is properly qualified by those provisos, and I do not quibble with them. My concern is for all those who will probably not qualify for housing benefit, who are just above the threshold for help and for whom rented accommodation — particularly, but not exclusively, in London—will rise in price, when it is already beyond their reach. Such people—they may be drivers, teachers, nurses or people in other jobs—run the risk of discovering that the Bill will make it more difficult for them to find housing, while landlords will obtain a better income from rent. So the issues of security and affordability are at the heart of the Bill.

We have a right to be suspicious of the motives of the private sector. In most cases, it is principally seeking an investment—not to provide good housing. That is why I am sad that, for example, the Government have not accepted that all private sector rented accommodation should be licensed in future, and that there should be continued supervision by those who are publicly accountable to ensure that the private sector, however big or small—it has decreased, and will not, I suppose, greatly increase — will be properly monitored and controlled.

The nature of the legislation harks back to legislation proposed in the past. One of the feelings after the Rent Act 1957 was that the Government had legislated not principally on the basis of an understanding of the effect of decontrol on the poor tenant, but on the basis of their belief in their political philosophy. The problem is that people do not behave as responsibly as any Government might wish, and the Bill does not protect tenants—as it should—against irresponsible behaviour by landlords.

Part II of the Bill deals with housing associations. In general, I welcome the extension of their role, and the Government's intention that they should do more. Housing associations are clearly a sector that have proved their worth. My concern is that the Government appear to be moving them from the public—as defined in the past — to the private sector. The housing association sector has always wanted to be in the third arm of housing — the voluntary sector, between the public and the private, but not of either. I hope that by the end of the Bill's passage we shall have sustained the independence of that sector and truly enabled it to grow and flourish.

The Government had the good fortune of the announcement last week by Nationwide Anglia, which has featured in every speech by every Department of Environment Minister that I have heard since then—[AN HON. MEMBER: "It should be welcomed."] Yes, it should. It was worthwhile and good. There were comments not just by politicians but by respected writers in the press, particularly over the weekend, suggesting that the private sector might not respond so willingly in all cases. The private sector will need a substantial return on capital to come into many of the areas that desperately need investment. My colleagues and I remain to be convinced that it will come into many areas to provide low-cost housing for rent, which is the desperate need in many of our urban and rural areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's helpful remarks. He was right to welcome that announcement by Nationwide Anglia. Perhaps he also welcomes, as I do, the announcement today by the private sector body sponsored by the Housing Corporation, the Housing Finance Corporation, that it will raise about £2 billion for housing associations over the next few years from the private market. That will go a long way to meet some of the understandable anxieties expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hughes: I welcome that. I make no bones about it —if money can be produced for the housing association sector, that is to be welcomed, because normally it has better, more local and more responsive housing management. Its track record is good. It has also produced a variety of housing management to meet different needs in different parts of the country, and for different sectors —sheltered housing, housing for the disabled and young people, and so on. I welcome that.

I say honestly to the Minister that I hope that the private sector can be encouraged—I am happy to do my bit—to support that sector of housing. If it can grow, many of the fears that I and others have will be alleviated, and we shall see a flourishing third arm. I hope that the Minister will not push housing associations formally into the private sector, and that they will be able to retain their independence.

Housing action trusts are the third substantial proposal in the Bill. The Minister was in my borough recently and knows well the horrendous problems that boroughs such

as Southwark have, created by the legacy of system-built and standard-built housing that went up during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, for reasons that we all know. Therefore, I do not object to private money and Government money coming to rescue what local authorities cannot rescue themselves. There is no doubt that, with the present Government's policies, they cannot rescue it themselves. But I hope sincerely that efforts are made for the trusts to be partnership enterprises.

My objection to the Bill, and that of my colleagues, is that the trusts are not designed to be a vehicle for partnership funding between local authorities and central Government. That is the way in which it should have been done. It should have been a structure for both sources of finance, to rescue some of our worst and most rundown estates. It is because of the lack of engagement of the local authorities and local people that we object to housing action trusts. If the Government get the Bill through the House, it will be in the interests of local authorities to co-operate rather than not to, and I hope that they will do that, but I hope that we can persuade the Government to adopt a change in attitude to allow partnership with local authorities as well.

The final substantial part of the Bill is the opting out, rent-a-landlord, choose-one's landlord or change-one's landlord section—the titles are varied. Soon after his appointment, the Minister for Housing and Planning said:

"We need a diversity of ownership which will give tenants the right to choose their landlords rather than the other way way round."

I fear that that is not what will happen. It is not inevitable, if the Minister thinks about it. I fear that landlords will choose an estate, but tenants will not have the choice. In many cases, they will be limited, if there is a choice at all, to the landlord or prospective landlord who is interested in their estate. There are many problems connected with voting in, voting out, whether the result is more than 50 per cent., and getting approval. There will be problems if the majority vote to have a new landlord, and some opt back. There is great concern that what, in theory, is a good idea—the freedom to go to somebody who may manage one's home better—may not turn out well in practice. Much local authority housing, like much private rented housing, is badly managed, and tenants are trapped in badly managed accommodation that nobody should ask them to live in. It may not be the solution that one would hope for.

I hope that we can ensure that there is not the same risk as there has been, for example, with the right to buy. People have bought their homes and found that the service charges are expensive. They then realise that they have taken on something that represents a step into the unknown and is much more dangerous than they had expected or wished.

The Bill is intended to change the face of rented housing in all sectors—public, voluntary and private. But with housing action trusts and opting out, the Bill will subject public housing to the final stage of what has often been the Thatcherite programme for the public services. Public housing will be underfunded, demoralised, criticised and privatised. That is the great danger. We shall continue to need public sector housing in the foreseeable future, particularly for the poorest in our community, and there is a danger that it will now even get less of the cake than it has had in recent years.

My colleagues in the Liberal party welcome the element of increased choice for tenants, but the Bill offers just a once-for-all, one-way choice, for council tenants only—and in practice, not even for all of them. We have long advocated an increased role for the voluntary sector and housing association movement, but their intended future in the private sector is something that they and we should be gravely unhappy about.

My main criticism is that I am certain that the Government's plans will mean higher rents. The explanatory and financial memoranda make that clear. With the Tory cuts of recent years and the housing budget more than any other set to continue to decline, the Bill will do little for the low-paid and the poorly paid.

We have tabled an amendment, which you have selected, Mr. Speaker. It expresses concern about the major defects of the Bill. If it is not passed by the House, we shall have to vote against the Bill because it does not meet the principal housing needs in Britain today.

6.47 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on one point, and that is the distinction with which my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) made his maiden speech. He spoke with considerable eloquence about our former colleague, Sir Edward du Cann. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey rightly referred to the fact that he was an eloquent spokesman for the rights of Back Benchers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton painted an eloquent word picture of one of the most beautiful parts of the United Kingdom. Were it not for the fact that we know that he will be nursing and attending to the needs of his own constituents in the same way as his distinguished predecessor did, so that it will remain a safe Conservative seat, I can assure my hon. Friend that we should be down there post haste giving him mutual aid in the highways and byways of west Somerset.

Those of us who knew my hon. Friend in a previous incarnation not many yards from here will know that he will bring to this Chamber and to the work of the House independence, and the House will respect that. As he identified in his speech, he is an honourable Member who has a view, a feel, a touch and a sympathy for the matters of the day and the interests of his constituency. I and, I know, my right hon. and hon. Friends will look forward greatly to his future contributions.

I declare three interests: first, I started my working life as an articled clerk in a firm of chartered surveyors, collecting rents every Monday morning; secondly, I am a consultant to a firm of surveyors who, as far as I am aware, do not act for any residential interests, nor for any building societies, but they might in the future; and, thirdly, I am a non-remunerated vice-president of the Building Societies Association. I welcome the part of this Bill that will give the building societies' pension funds and private sector the confidence to invest long term and responsibly, to provide for the needs, wants and rights of those who deserve to rent.

I was impressed by the contribution of Mr. Tim Melville-Ross, the chief general manager and director of the Nationwide Anglia building society, in his interview on the "Money Box" programme on BBC4 this morning. He answered all the fears and concerns of Opposition Members. The building societies see political stability in

[Mr. John Heddle]

the Government, who are not hidebound by political dogma, and can foresee the time when their investment of £600 million in flats and houses to rent in the inner cities, in particular in Glasgow, in partnership with local authorities and the Government, will help to regenerate the inner cities and provide decent homes for those who live in them.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton said—this point was not referred to in the speech of any Opposition Member—a large proportion of people now live in housing over which they have the right of security, but they do not have the privilege of mobility. Those who live in local authority rented accommodation are static and do not have the same opportunity as owner-occupiers to move about to seek work. By liberalising the rented sector, they will have a better oppqrtunity to do that.

I am not convinced that local authorities are the most compassionate and feeling landlords. When I spent Monday mornings on my bicycle in a town in east Kent collecting rents, I was the landlord's representative, the link between the tenant and the landlord. If the tenant wanted a repair done, he knew that I would be his messenger to the landlord. There is no doubt that the rent roll of local authorities has become more computerised and the landlord and rent collector have given way to the district housing office, so the tenant has become alienated and isolated from the landlord. I wonder whether this poor management is the reason why some £250 million is owing by local authority tenants to their landlords. I wonder whether this is the reason why many local authorities keep houses empty for three months, six months, or 12 months. *[Interruption.]* The Library can confirm to Opposition Members who are intervening from a sedentary position that over 30,000 houses in the ownership of local authorities have been left empty for well over 12 months.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Does the hon. Member have any comment to make to, or any message of compassion or concern for, people who are the victims of the record number of mortgage repossessions by building societies at this time?

Mr. Heddle: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am referring to rent arrears and voids and to the mismanagement of local authority properties. I am not entirely convinced that local authorities are the best estate managers. The Bill will enable other organisations — building societies, pension funds, insurance companies and other approved landlords — to contribute to much-needed accommodation for those who deserve to rent. That is why I welcome in the Bill the opportunity for housing associations to borrow on the investment value of the portfolios they have built up over the past 20 or 25 years in the open market. That seems to me to make sound commercial common sense.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heddle: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I am sure he will catch Mr. Speaker's eye in the not too distant future.

I sound a word of warning to the Minister, and I would be grateful if he could find time to reply in his speech tonight. Thirty years ago there was a certain Peter Rachman, and it is incumbent upon every hon. Member, in particular those who serve on the Standing Committee of the Bill, to ensure that the likes of Mr. Peter Rachman do not occur again. One such gentleman on the national housing stage has received some notoriety in the press recently and has received the attention of the courts. I refer to a Mr. Hoogstraten. I do not wish to dwell upon the details of Mr. Hoogstraten or his string of companies, but I understand that if a local authority serves upon him a public health notice or notice under the Housing Act, he transfers that property into another company and so eliminates his liability for the repairs, the public health notice, or whatever.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider that, in the past 18 months, the House has passed the Companies Act, which imposes a personal duty upon directors of companies. Should they fail to comply with the conditions of the Act, they are personally liable in the magistrates' courts. I wonder whether it would be possible to bring in at the Committee stage a condition to protect tenants, to ensure that if a landlord exploits tenants or in some way denies their rights, the directors and officers of the company would be liable, as they are under the Companies Act 1986.

In conclusion, the Housing Act, introduced by the first Administration of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, brought in the tenants' charter and gave to tenants the same rights and security that private sector tenants had long enjoyed. Included in the tenants' charter was the right for tenants to take in lodgers and sub-tenants. On Fridays and Saturdays in the advice bureau in my Mid-Staffordshire constituency, I see a large number of single people who will never acquire the key of their own council house while they remain single because they will not attain the requisite number of points. But I am sure that they would be happy to have the sub-tenancy of a house that is too large for a long-term local authority tenant. I do not believe that local authorities, whether controlled by Conservatives, Labour or Liberal, are doing enough to pursue the benefits of the tenants' charter. That is why the housing lists in many hon. Member's constituencies are theoretically and technically as long as they are.

I welcome the Bill. It is imaginative. Home ownership is rising and will continue to rise because that is what the majority of hon. Members' constituents want; the independence and security of home ownership. But some will never be able to aspire to that privilege. We must ensure that they have a similar right to rent, and the Bill will go a long way down that path.

6.59 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): In line with your wishes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall be brief. I congratulate the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on his maiden speech. I do not wish to embellish his remarks on the beauty of his constituency, because my vivid recollection from Taunton is of watching my county of Kent being thrashed by Somerset. However, I had a pleasant lunch in the village of Combe Florey. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will continue to make contributions to our debates in line with the standard set by his maiden speech.

The proposals in the Bill are complex and wide-ranging and certainly the most blatant and direct attack to date on private and public housing provisions. For this Government, that is saying a lot. The Bill is largely based

on unsubstantiated dogma, rather than on any analysis of real housing problems. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, it contains no references to housing needs or to the homeless. I remember that, as a young councillor on Paddington council in the early 1960s, along with my fellow Labour councillors I tried to expose the activities of a certain Peter Rachman. He has already been mentioned many times in the debate, and I suspect that he will be mentioned many more times. Despite our attempts to expose him, probably Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies did more to bring the activities of this man to the notice of the nation.

If enacted, this turgid Bill will make Rachmanism the law of the land. It is clear that the effects of part I relating to the private sector will reduce the security of tenure that is available to tenants. At the same time, it will reduce the amount of housing benefit — despite the lukewarm assurances given by the Secretary of State. Higher market rents will replace fair rents and no doubt there will be profiteering by unscrupulous landlords. The new Rachmans will use this legislation to harass tenants and to gain possession, because landlords will no longer need to be approved.

This legislation will inflict horrific damage on the private sector. Many of my hon. Friends have a good deal of private sector housing provision in their constituencies and they will develop that point as the debate proceeds. I shall concentrate on the effects that the Bill will have on many thousands of my constituents who are in public housing. They are typical of millions of people throughout Britain.

Tameside council is in my constituency and the real housing problems there are shown by a few short statistics. They are that 72 per cent. of all council tenants are already on housing benefit, that 9,142 people are on the waiting list for houses, and that 9,664 tenants are in rent arrears with the local council. There are over 1,200 homeless families. When those constituents heard that a new housing Bill was on the way, their expectations must have risen. They will soon be disappointed when they hear about this debate.

The Bill will redistribute homes away from the very people who need them to those who can afford to buy homes—even the spare home, about which the Secretary of State spoke. New homes will not materialise as a result of this Bill. With council house building at its lowest point since the 1920s, it was probably too much to hope that the Government would do anything other than make the situation worse. The Government attack what they see as the profligacy of responsible Labour councils that subsidise council house rents. In my area, the annual subsidy is £1·6 million. That saves the poorest members of the community about £1·60 per week in rent. Controls on such council spending will put yet another tax on the least fortunate members of society.

The financial basis for transferring council houses to new landlords or to housing action trusts is the latest Government jumble sale of public property, and it is worrying. In Tameside, houses will transfer at an average investment value of £2,800. This will give the new landlord plenty of rope with which to induce council tenants with short-term sweeteners before they are hanged by that same rope. While the sale goes on, the debt charges are left with the council and will have to be paid by a decreasing number of tenants. Is the Government's final solution to housing problems the imposition of extortionate rents upon the most needy, including the elderly and the disabled and those who are unable to transfer?

On Friday, hopefully, a number of hon. Members will present petitions to the House and I hope to have some petitioners from my constituency who believe that the housing crisis can be resolved by joining the campaign for homes and jobs. For every job created in the construction industry, another job is created in the wider economy. There are about 500,000 building workers on the dole and each one costs £2,400 a year in social security benefits and lost taxes. Therefore, the answer to the crisis is blindingly obvious to my constituents and, I suspect, to the Secretary of State's constituents. Why do the Government continue to ignore that?

I am happy to see and hear that opposition to the Bill is mounting and that it is coming from many unexpected quarters—including some Tories in the House and many more outside, and from many people who would normally support the Tory party. They realise that the Bill is based on sheer political dogma at the public expense. The dogma of home ownership at any price is being forced on them at a time when many people's ability to pay has been seriously impaired. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, that is instanced by the 700 per cent. rise since 1979 in mortgage defaulters.

The dogma is that private landlords are in some way better than council landlords, but there is no mention of the fact that since 1980 local authorities have been forced by the Government to increase rents by about 40 per cent. over inflation. We also have the dogma of Tory choice. However, it is choice for the rich and the profit-seeking landlords while the low-paid, the unemployed and the disabled will have no choice and in many cases will have no home because of this legislation.

Opposition to the Bill is growing. I have been in the House for over 17 years and I recently addressed the largest meeting that I have ever seen in my constituency. It is quite clear that tenants' groups are beginning to realise what the Bill means for them because there was a massive meeting on the Hattersley estate. Opposition is growing in my constituency and, I suspect, in the constituency of every hon. Member. I hope that the Bill will be amended in Committee and in the other place. At the end of the day, it should be amended out of sight, because that is what it deserves.

7.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): In my first contribution to the House, I hope that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) will forgive me if I do not follow exactly the line of his argument. I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye in this debate which is of special relevance to the constituency of Birmingham, Hall Green, which I have the honour to represent.

For those hon. Members who are unfamiliar with Hall Green, I can tell them that it is an urban constituency of a primarily residential nature that stretches along the southern perimeter of Birmingham, the second great city of Britain. It is a constituency of contrasts. For the visitor approaching from Stratford in the south, it presents one of the most attractive tree-lined entry routes in the city of Birmingham. On the other hand, to the visitor approaching from the Bromsgrove or Alcester direction along the A435 a very different atmosphere presents itself.

[Mr. Andrew Hargreaves]

Decaying tower blocks stand like sentinels to remind the visitor of the municipal madness that spawned their creation. These tower blocks—many of them shoddily built with faulty materials to faulty designs and badly maintained — cost almost as much as conventional housing to put up because of their height and they have cost an arm and a leg in repairs ever since. Matters have been made worse by the fact that the local council has failed to defray any of those costs back to the original erring builders and contractors.

Unfortunately, in my constituency, faulty design and faulty materials are not restricted to tower blocks. The owners of Smiths' houses will readily testify to that. At this point, I pay a special tribute to my predecessor, Sir Reginald Eyre, who served my constituents with diligence and distinction for 22 years. I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House remember his years in this place with great affection. His contributions on the subject of housing will be remembered well by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench. A special tribute should be paid to his efforts on behalf of Smiths' homeowners, for whom he worked with great diligence. By his efforts, Smiths' houses officially received designated status under the Housing Defects Act. As I hope to take up the mantle laid down by him and to continue to strive for those who have to live in substandard accommodation, whether in the rented or in the private sector, I am grateful to have an opportunity to speak in this debate.

Although Hall Green is on the perimeter of the city of Birmingham, it has many of the housing problems normally associated with inner cities. It has an unusually large concentration of council estates, made up of tower blocks and conventional housing. Many of the estates are in an appalling state of repair — particularly in the Partons road and Dawberry hall areas.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) who implied that few of his constituents complained about council housing because 40 per cent. of the letters in my mail bag every morning come from tenants in the council housing sector. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe that council administrations are at fault in the management of their estates, let him come to Birmingham.

The examples that I have chosen illustrate the repeated failure of council administrations to manage, repair and improve their housing stock. Therefore, I particularly welcome parts II, III and IV of the Bill. They deal with the enlargement of the scope for housing associations, the setting up of housing action trust areas—I put in a plea for my constituency to be considered for a pilot scheme —and the option, which is only an option for council house tenants to transfer their properties to landlords who can better demonstrate an ability to refurbish, repair and manage their tenanted accommodation.

Parts II, III and IV of the Bill will be of enormous benefit to my constituents in Hall Green. I have described the number of complaints that come from them about the management of local council properties. I am certain that the Bill will greatly help them and I therefore support it.

7.13 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My first job is to congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on an eloquent maiden speech. I am sure that he will contribute to many debates in the House. I must warn him that in future we may find it necessary to criticise some of his remarks—and perhaps even to intervene in one of his speeches. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, although there were obviously some parts of his speech with which I disagree. I would also pay tribute to his predecessor, whom I have known here for a number of years and who was known as a very hard-working Member of Parliament.

Mr. Allan Roberts: He was a wet.

Mr. Winnick: Indeed, he was something of a wet, and we shall see whether his successor is a wet.

There is an acute housing crisis in this country. Far too many families are forced to live in squalid conditions in bed-and-breakfast hostels. We have long waiting lists, in my local authority area as elsewhere. Many people are waiting to be housed for the first time and many of the families living in multi-storey blocks, some of them with two children, now have to wait years to be allocated a house by the council. Local authorities are unable to undertake a substantial amount of the repair work that is needed because of the cuts described by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

The Bill does not have much relevance to any of those problems. It is more relevant to the Government's continuing vendetta against the rented public sector, which they are again trying to undermine.

However, the Bill represents a positive response to those Conservative Members who have long urged the Government to do away with existing rent controls and regulations in the private sector. In the last Paliament, a number of Conservative Members attempted to bring in ten-minute Bills to do away with existing protection in the privately rented sector. On most occasions, if not all, I was the Labour Member who successfully defeated the measures. I was able to do so because Ministers were under an unofficial Whip not to vote. They did not want to give the country any indication that if they won the election they intended to do what some of their Back Benchers were urging them to do. One of the most enthusiastic supporters of a change in the Rent Act regulations was, of course, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow).

Under the Bill, council tenants are to be encouraged to find alternative landlords. Why tenants should wish to place themselves at the tender mercies of private landlords and property companies escapes me entirely, especially as such tenants would be on assured tenancies and thus subject to the payment of market rents. I cannot imagine many genuine housing associations being interested in taking over council dwellings. The aim is clearly to transfer properties from the public to the privately rented sector. That is the purpose of the so-called tenants' choice. The Bill provides no such right for private tenants who decide that they want to opt out. No one can be surprised at the absence of such a provision from the Bill, which excludes local authorities from being designated approved landlords for the purpose of the provision allowing tenants to choose an alternative landlord.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) was right about the voting system, if it can be described as such, which would mean a sort of Russian style democracy in action. I am sure that my hon. Friends will want to pursue that point carefully in Committee.

The purpose of the proposed housing action trusts is to take over local authority housing in a given area and then,

in due course, to pass it on to other landlords and not back to the local authority. Clause 57 requires the Secretary of State to consult the local housing authority and residents before such a transfer can take place, but that is all. There is no question in this case of any voting whatever. The Secretary of State makes up his mind and that is that, no matter how much opposition there is from tenants or the local authority. The Secretary of State simply introduces statutory instruments and the housing action trust can take over the property.

Who will be appointed to the bodies? In the main, it will be business people. There will be no democratic accountability and there will be no guarantee that the people appointed will have any knowledge of housing.

The day-to-day job of rehousing people in the ordinary process and of dealing with homelessness will not go to the proposed housing action trusts; it will remain with the local authorities, which will have all the remaining problems.

Mr. Boateng: But not the money.

Mr. Winnick: Yes, my hon. Friend is right to say that they will not receive the money either.

The Government are determined to replace the role of the elected local authority, in nearly all cases Labour-controlled. Where the Government feel that they can get away with it, they abolish the local authority as they did the Greater London council. What concerns me and my right hon. and hon. Friends is that increasingly democratic accountability is being eroded and undermined. That happened with the urban development corporations and will happen again with the housing action trusts. That is totally wrong and is just one reason, among many others, why the Bill should be opposed.

In response to my intervention earlier the Secretary of State admitted, perhaps for the first time in his life, that mistakes had been made during the introduction of the Rent Act 1957. Of course, many of the claims now being made about this Bill in relation to a revival of the private rented sector were made when the 1957 Rent Bill was passing through the House. It was said by the then Minister that the 1957 legislation would revive the privately rented sector and deal with many of the outstanding problems in housing. However, the result of the 1957 Act was a substantial reduction in the amount of rented accommodation and it led to the abuses that have caused such outrage in the country. Even the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), who is known for his enthusiasm about the private rented sector, warned about the possibility of another bout of Rachmanism.

I am perhaps one of the few Members who happened to be a member of a local authority when the 1957 Act was in operation. Even with all the problems we had to face then we decided to rehouse the people, who were being evicted, lawfully, under the 1957 Act. I have some knowledge of what happened under that legislation and of the misery that was caused as a result of Tory dogma. The Secretary of State has a great deal of cheek to refer to dogma in the Labour party when it was Tory dogma that led to the 1957 Act and it is Tory dogma that is responsible for this proposed legislation.

In the private rented sector the emphasis is on market rents and such rents will undoubtedly be higher than would be the position if a mortgage were being paid. Also, a person paying a mortgage would obtain tax relief. The *Evening Standard* of 9 November contained some advertisements for rented accommodation and I shall quote some of the rents being asked. There were some houses available, not many, for rents ranging from £130 to £240 a week. One or two-bedroom flats were available from £30 to £70 a week. Undoubtedly, such rent levels would be much higher under this Bill.

We are concerned on this side with people who cannot find rented accommodation, cannot afford a mortgage or are living with their families in bed-and-breakfast hostels. How many of those people could afford the rents I have just quoted? Is there any indication that such rents would be lower? Of course, as I have said, if anything, rents will be higher as a result of the proposed legislation.

How many tenants would be able to claim housing benefit in order to pay such exorbitant rents? Housing benefit is being substantially reduced. Rent officers will assess how far the rents being paid are unreasonable, but only for the purpose of deciding whether housing benefit should be paid, not to decide whether the rent should be lower. The rent officer will have no such power any longer. Is it desirable for large public subsidies to be paid to private landlords in order for them to charge what would undoubtedly be exorbitant rents, certainly in areas of acute housing shortage?

The Secretary of State denied that existing tenants would be in any danger. He said that they are protected and that there is no question of existing tenants in the private sector being in any difficulty. However, it is interesting to note that the Secretary of State emphasised the powers in the Bill against harassment. It is interesting too that the White Paper said:

> "It is important that existing tenants whose Rent Act rights will be preserved should be protected against the minority of landlords who may be prepared to harass them in order to obtain vacant possession and to relet at higher rents."

Is that not an indication of the fact that even the Government recognise that existing private tenants may well be at risk from the activities of property companies and landlords who know that if the tenants who are at present under regulated tenancies are forced out the accommodation can be relet at market rents?

Rachmanism — it was not just one unscrupulous person by any means — came about as a result of landlords knowing that if an existing tenant could be forced out, the place could be sold off with vacant possession at a much higher price or relet at deregulated rents. That was the incentive for Rachmanism. I say to the Secretary of State today that the same incentive exists as a result of the measure he is introducing. Many existing tenants have every reason to feel anxiety and fear that if the Bill becomes law their position as tenants will be greatly undermined.

The Minister who replies to the debate will of course say that there are powers in the Bill to deal with the activities of unscrupulous landlords or property companies. I agree such powers will be introduced but they will not be sufficiently effective. It may well be that they will not be used in many cases. It will be difficult to charge directors of large property companies who may use a third party to carry out their dirty work. Even if charges are brought and fines are applied by the courts, in nine cases out of 10 the tenant being pressured and intimidated out of their accommodation will not be allowed back inside

[Mr. Winnick]

those premises. Therefore, as my hon. Friends have been saying, we have every reason to fear the consequences of the Bill.

On the matter of security of tenure, I agree that there is a difference between this Bill and the Rent Act 1957. Under the 1957 Act security of tenure did not exist for new tenancies. It continues to exist under this Bill. However, although security of tenure will continue to exist in law for assured tenancies, it will be largely undermined as a result of the market rents. Once an agreement comes to an end between a landlord and tenant, shorthold or otherwise, and the landlord says that he wants much more in rent and the tenant is not in a position to pay, what is the use of security of tenure? The tenant will not have any recourse in law. Therefore, the provisions in the Bill relating to the private rented sector are 80 per cent. or 85 per cent. the same as those in the Rent Act 1957.

The Secretary of State lives in his own dream world. He spoke during his speech about anyone who had a house to spare to rent, so I asked my hon. Friends whether they did. They all said no. Perhaps the Secretary of State has friends on the Conservative Benches and in other places who find that language understandable. To them it does not cause the amusement and merriment that it does among Labour Members and people at large. This is an odd person to be Secretary of State at a time of acute housing crisis.

I agree with those Conservative Members who said that most people will resolve their housing position by obtaining mortgages. There is not much doubt that, insofar as people can afford to do so, they will want to own their own place. The Labour party, as we have said many times, has never been against owner-occupation. Far from being against it, we have encouraged it in almost every respect. For the record, to give substance to what I have said, in the late 1960s a Labour Government introduced the option mortgage scheme, which made it much easier for people on modest incomes to become owner-occupiers —strange action for a party supposedly against owner-occupation. If people want to become owner-occupiers, that is fine—let us give them every encouragement.

There is some agreement between Conservative and Labour Members about there remaining a substantial minority of people—more than Conservative Members think—who will not be able to obtain a mortgage. They cannot afford it and will recognise that from the beginning. It would be wrong if they were pressurised into obtaining a mortgage when clearly they did not have enough income to pay it off.

Like my right hon. and hon. Friends, I believe that the responsibility for providing the necessary rented places should lie with the local authority, genuine housing associations and some co-operative projects, but, in the main, with the local authority. It is sometimes argued that local authorities are very bureaucratic and not concerned. My local authority of Walsall was probably the first to decentralise its housing system. The authority provided 28 neighbourhood offices in the borough and that type of decentralisation has been copied by a number of other local authorities, mainly by Labour ones.

The housing problem of those who are not able to afford a mortgage and who are often in desperate need of rented accommodation will not be solved in the private sector. That sector is interested in one objective only—making the maximum profit. If property companies and private landlords were not concerned with making the maximum profit, there would not be much justification in being involved in property. Why should a company be involved in lettings unless it wants to make the maximum profit?

All the evidence from private landlords to the Select Committee on the Environment, which looked into the private rented sector and of which I was a member, showed that they wanted the maximum return on their investment.

The Bill will not solve any housing problems. It is a charter for property companies, unscrupulous landlords and potential Rachmans. The only way in which we can help those people who are in need of rented accommodation, who have as much right as any Member of Parliament to satisfactory housing and who cannot afford a mortgage, is through local authorities and genuine housing associations. That is why the Bill should be rejected and fought at every stage — as my hon. Friend the Member for Walton said, line by line. When we go into the Division Lobby at midnight, we shall go in with the same justification as our Labour predecessors did in voting against the 1957 rent legislation.

7.34 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Over the years, I have often had the privilege of following the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) in housing debates. We do not usually agree on housing, although there are some subjects—for example, Soviet Jewry—on which we do. At least the hon. Gentleman is frank. He does not believe in private renting and in that he is acting in fine Labour tradition. Richard Crossman, as Minister for Housing and Local Government, said that he had a natural prejudice against landlords, and the hon. Gentleman shares his attitudes. He is entitled to follow that fine Labour tradition if he wishes.

I agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, North when he pays tribute to the excellent maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) whose predecessor, Sir Reginald Eyre, was popular on both sides of the House. We look forward to hearing frequently from my hon. Friend.

Before saying a few brief words about the Bill, I want to express regret about something that is not in it, and in this I may carry the hon. Member for Walsall, North with me. I had hoped that the Bill would contain a measure to deal with the problem of cowboys. This point was in the Green Paper produced two years ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I had hoped that there would be proposals to implement schemes whereby the only firms entitled to carry out improvement work were responsible and properly qualified, and on a local authority list. That idea has been floated, and there is no need for any more discussion on it. The proposals are well known. I am sorry that nothing has been done to implement them, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will return to them soon.

I must declare a well-known interest. I have been connected with the building industry for many years and the firm with which I am concerned is involved especially in the role of sponsored housing. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to "architectural experiments". He was talking about housing and flats built 20 years ago —system building—with the support of Governments of both persuasions. My right hon. Friend was critical of local government, so one should point out that the main

drive for system building came from housing Ministers of both parties. At that time, I worked in the Conservative party's research department and later with the National Federation of Building Trades Employers. I listened to many debates in the House and heard continuous all-party support from the former housing Minister, Sir Keith Joseph, Mr. Pannell and many other members of both parties, pressing for those buildings to be built. We are now paying the penalties for those decisions.

That is why I am glad to note the part of the Bill concerned with housing action trusts. It will be especially useful not only in inner-city policy but in dealing with bad housing estates in outer-city areas or elsewhere, such as in my constituency. It is obviously much better if the work of the HATs were in conjunction with local authority work. This is not a ridiculous suggestion. I am sure that many local authorities will want to recommend that a HAT be set up in their areas.

Before the general election, many local authorities, especially if they were Labour controlled, saw the bad housing conditions, heard the continual grumbles of their tenants and knew that the problems had to be addressed. They said to themselves, "We shall sit back and wait for a Labour Government to produce, we hope, more money for us. We shall do nothing until then." They saw that that would not happen, so the option of sitting back and waiting for a Labour Government was closed.

Another option which was adopted by some local authorities was to sell the land to private enterprise. A third option, which has a much wider basis of support —it has grown since the general election—is that there should be co-operation between the local authority and private enterprise to tackle bad housing estates and to bring in the private funding, for which the White Paper called and which is implicit in the Bill. That must make sense. We know that it can be done because the urban development corporations have done it.

I hope that during the passage of the Bill, and in the subsequent administrative action, there will be a strong realisation of the need for co-operation between the HATs — I hope set up with local authority support — the UDCs and the proposed mini-UDCs. The Bill's schedules are detailed about how the HATs will work. Hon. Members who serve on the Committee can get their teeth into those details and ensure that they are satisfactory. We must ensure that there is proper co-ordination both on delivering the inner-city policy and, in conjunction with local authorities, on action to deal with bad housing estates. My right hon. Friend will be aware that there has been a great deal of criticism both within the industry and elsewhere of the large numbers of Departments, Ministers and organisations that separately address the inner-city policy. The HATs will be another contribution to that. It is absolutely essential to act quickly to bring together all those various strands.

The *Daily Telegraph* recently suggested that the Prime Minister was thinking of appointing a Minister for the inner cities. I sincerely hope that she does not do so. We do not need any more Ministers — we already have plenty, each with different Departments and jobs. If there must be a Minister with special responsibility for the inner cities, that Minister should be my right hon. Friend— *[Interruption.]* Am I interrupting the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts)? I am so sorry. The problem should be tackled not by one super-Minister but by effective, well-led task forces, responsible to my right hon. Friend, that can co-ordinate the activity on the ground. If I were asked to mention a name to head such a task force, in an administrative and executive capacity, I would not hesitate to recommend my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He is the person best qualified to do the job.

A heavy responsibility rests upon the Department of the Environment to ensure that actions are properly followed through. The Bill, especially the part dealing with HATs, represents a major proposal to deal with bad housing, following on from what the UDCs are already doing. We have an opportunity, and we must use it effectively, to ensure that the right administrative arrangements are set in place to co-ordinate activity on the ground.

7.42 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): This Bill must be judged against several tests of sensible housing policy. First, to what extent will it encourage the provision of good quality and suitable housing, especially in the rented sector? Secondly, will it allow the development and consolidation of new and, sometimes, novel forms of tenure, such as those that have developed during the past 10 years? They have proved very important. Thirdly, will it make housing provision more equal and less class-ridden than it is currently? Finally, will it improve housing conditions both in inner cities and in outer areas such as my constituency?

There are real fears, especially on Merseyside and in the north-west, that the Bill generally, and the new funding arrangements for housing associations in particular, will not help those in the greatest need. The Merseyside housing association movement is concerned that the new flexible arrangements for housing association grants will not work unless and until the Government concede that the grant provision within the funding arrangements should be at least 70 per cent. Because Merseyside is an area of high cost but low—and in some cases falling—property values, the fear is that the new funding arrangements will impede rather than encourage the developments of additional housing association properties from those in greatest need.

Another fear is that the changes in types of tenancy and the rent phasing arrangements will inhibit the mobility of those renting within the housing association sector. They may be caught by a controlled rent that, as soon as they move, transfer or exchange, will become decontrolled. That hardly squares up with the well-known philosophy of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who once exhorted people to get on their bikes. It is not easy to get on a bike and look for a job elsewhere if transferring a tenancy results in a huge rent increase.

The housing association movement on Merseyside demonstrably provides for those in need, as do the local authorities. The Liverpool Housing Trust has some 4,200 tenants in its properties. The Minister may be aware that its survey last year, which was submitted to the Housing Corporation, discovered that 66 per cent. of its 4,200 tenants were wholly dependent on state benefit and that a further 18 per cent. mostly low paid were to some extent dependent on housing benefit. Therefore, a substantial number of poorer people are being decently housed by that association. We can imagine the consequence for those tenants of the proposed changes in rent structure.

[Mr. George Howarth]

The Bill must be amended, and that is even more essential in view of the recent changes in housing benefit regulations. Otherwise, there will be a dramatic change in the tenant profile. The proposed changes in the housing association grant system will mean that it will not be within the grasp of the poorer sections of the community to afford the rent for a housing association property.

The housing co-operative movement on Merseyside is also deeply concerned about the Bill. I am grateful to the Minister for opening the Southene co-operative in my constituency in September. He was fulsome in his praise of the development and the tenants involved. There are 15 co-operatives in the borough of Knowsley, and the movement is concerned that the distinctiveness with which it conducts its affairs will be undermined by the Bill.

This weekend I was fortunate to address a conference of the National Federation of Housing Co-operatives, which asked me to bring its comments to the attention of the House. It stated:

"The proposed changes to the Housing Association Grant Regime will make it more difficult to continue developing housing co-operatives in stress areas at rents which those in housing need can afford. In particular the Bill does not contain provisions to strengthen or develop the network of Secondary Housing Co-operatives, the organisations which have been essential catalysts in supporting the growth of the housing co-operative movement over the past ten years."

I ask the Minister seriously to note those comments.

The distinctiveness and democratic nature of a housing co-operative makes it a central and integral part of the design process, and the co-operatives fear that that process will not continue under these proposals. If the new grant system is accepted, the inevitable consequence will be package deals. For example, a builder will be asked to build a mix of certain types of houses, but the co-operatives will not have any say in the shape or form of the proposed co-operative estate or individual houses.

That would seriously undermine the co-operative principle in housing which has been so successful on Merseyside and increasingly in other parts of the country. When the Bill is in Committee I hope that the Minister will seriously consider taking the housing co-operative movement out of these arrangements altogether so that it can continue to flourish and provide for people's housing needs in its own distinctive but equally important way.

The housing association trust proposals and pick-a-landlord scheme cannot really be judged properly or finally until they are also seen in the context of the whole system of housing finance. I accept that on occasions council housing is not all that it might be, and I also accept that in some areas, because of the sheer volume of houses that local authorities' have come to control, it is very difficult to manage and maintain so much property. So there may be a role for something like a housing action trust, but it must be seen in the context of its finances and method of operation and be looked at on the basis of working in conjunction, in partnership, with local residents and local authorities.

Some cynics peddle the argument that Government, with a whole plethora of arrangements — development corporations, task forces and now HATs—are latter day colonisers of the inner city, bringing people in to do good works during the day who then clear off somewhere else in the evening. Those people who manage such initiatives seem to have no logical connection with local residents and local authorities who are part of that community. That may be a cynical comment on what has happened and what is proposed, but if the Government are not careful these proposals that are intended to help will alienate more than they encourage and this may well happen in both inner-city and outer estates. I understand that further legislation is proposed on housing finance. It would have been more sensible if the two things could have been brought together so that people could judge the financial as well as the administrative changes more fully.

I would like to know more about the possibility, under the pick-a-landlord scheme, that properties will carry with them a dowry rather like a marriage arrangement. How will that work and what effect will it have? Who will pay for it? The costs and upon whom they will fall are causes of considerable worry in certain circles.

My conclusions are based on a number of fears, the first of which is that arrangements, certainly in the north of England and on Merseyside, for private and housing association grant funding — flexible HAG as it is becoming known — might just choke off the supply of good quality housing for poorer sections of the community. Even if this is not the intention, it may be the effect. I hope that efforts can be made to resolve this in Committee, but there is a widespread and possibly justified fear that the housing co-operative movement, which is a lusty infant, may be strangled shortly after its birth if the Government do not give more detailed thought to how to apply these proposals to this sector, or if they should take it out of the arrangements altogether.

The housing finance system has not been properly examined. Any moves towards greater equality between tenure types are not under consideration and the proposals may end up, again unwittingly, tilting the balance even further away from those in greatest need and towards those who are in the best position to afford what is on offer. It could lead to resentment on the part of those who live in the inner cities and outer estates in the same way as we hear of resentment building up among local residents in the London docklands.

The Bill has the stamp of a measure conceived more in prejudice than in concern. Unless the Government accept the need for radical amendments, it is a Bill which may create more problems than it sets out to solve.

7.55 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I rise to make my maiden speech deeply conscious of the value of the democratic process which in this country confers on hon. Members the privilege of speaking in this House. It is too readily taken for granted.

My first and most pleasant task is to pay a tribute to my predecessor as hon. Member for Gloucester, the right hon. Mrs. Sally Oppenheim. Mrs. Oppenheim made her maiden speech in this House 17 years ago this month. She was in her time here an extremely popular Member, popular for her charm, the warmth of her personality and her great ability, which took her to the post for Minister of Consumer Affairs. I know that right hon. and hon. Members will wish to convey good wishes to her in her new post as chairman of the National Consumer Council.

In her role in Gloucester, she has become something of a legend. She has always fought to secure the best possible interests of the city and has always been somebody to whom Gloucestrians could turn, knowing that, if there were any solution to their problem, Sally would find it. She

is, as they say, a very hard act to follow indeed, but I will try to do so and to justify the confidence which the electors of Gloucester have placed in me. Most particularly I will seek to follow her tradition of never allowing officialdom to stand in the way of justice, fairness and common sense.

The constituency that I represent consists not only of the city of Gloucester itself but also of an area which comes within Stroud district council, which incorporates the area known as Upton St. Leonards, Quedgeley and Hardwicke, and also the two small villages of Elmore and Longney. The city of Gloucester is one of great heritage and tradition. It has a magnificent Norman cathedral where the Domesday Book was commissioned by William the Conqueror at Christmas, 1085. It is also the only place, apart from Westminster, which has witnessed the coronation of a monarch—Henry III—the burial of a monarch—Edward II—and the sitting of Parliament. If the course of history had been slightly different, I might have found myself making a maiden speech in my own constituency.

Today, Gloucester is a thriving shopping centre with well below the national average of unemployment. Its older businesses, which have incurred difficulties in the past, are now well on the road to recovery, and there are many new ones. The city has found particular favour with relocating financial institutions. The area known as Barnwood Fields is seeing the erection of a new headquarters for the Imperial Trident life assurance company, which will bring many jobs to the city, together with a new administrative office for the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society. The other very exciting development is the refurbishment of Gloucester docks, which offers for the foreseeable future substantial opportunities for employment and also forms a considerable tourist attraction.

Gloucester also boasts excellent communications and is set amid beautiful countryside. It deserves to be popular, its people are friendly, warm and loyal, and I predict that many new businesses looking for places to relocate in the future will find in Gloucester exactly the combination of resources and amenities that they seek.

Although Gloucester is the county town of Gloucestershire, it has a somewhat different atmosphere from the county, and some unexpected characteristics. It has an inner-city area with some fairly typical inner-city problems, of which the most serious is housing. That is why I sought to catch your eye in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Gloucester has well above the average level of home ownership. There are also some fine housing estates, including the new estate currently being built and known as Abbeydale III. Nevertheless, there are severe pressures on accommodation and especially on the council waiting list. Pressure is particularly heavy on family accommodation. Some families have been waiting eight years to be rehoused. Others, with two bedrooms fewer than they need, have had to endure that situation for more than five years. I am aware, too, that some people have been in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for two years, when the national average is usually measured in weeks. I conclude from those problems that the present system of housing provision, especially local authority provision, has not been successful—that it has, indeed, failed dismally. For that reason, I very much welcome the provisions of the Bill.

I was interested to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) about the Labour party's original attitude to the right to buy. The right to buy was pioneered in Gloucester and the sale of council houses was already well ahead in the late 1960s. I would welcome a speeding up of the current rate of sale, as progress is slower than it should be. I do not believe that exhortations from the Government and glossy literature, however persuasive, will be sufficient to achieve the level of sales that one would like. I foresee a role for building societies and estate agents in a much more promotional and positive attitude towards securing more sales.

I am also disappointed that the Bill contains no proposals for portable discounts, which have been well explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), although I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning is considering the possibility of introducing such a scheme. Some clarification of the associated legal technicality is urgently required. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly feel able to turn his attention to that.

I must also add my name to those who have expressed reservations about the abolition of the cost floor. If recently built property is to attract such a discount that it is disposed of at a price lower than the debt charge remaining for the local authority, that seems frankly ridiculous.

On a number of occasions, the House has debated the subject of capital receipts. It is well known that local authorities may spend only the prescribed proportion of 20 per cent. of capital receipts except on capital repairs in the year of receipt, and that that is taken into account in housing investment programme allocations. The defect of that arrangement is that it has no direct regard to the relative overall debt position of individual councils, some of which are in a far healthier position than others. I should like to see greater flexibility so that in certain cases larger proportions of capital receipts would be available to local authorities.

I welcome the proposals for the deregulation of the private rented sector, and I endorse the comments about the initiative taken by the Nationwide Anglia building society. Even as the law currently stands, however, I believe that more could be achieved — but for the activities of certain rent officers. I could show hon. Members two-roomed flats in Gloucester suitable for couples for which the rents have been fixed at almost half those for identical accommodation divided into two separate units for two people. The result is non-availability of rented accommodation for couples, who therefore have to go into bed-and-breakfast accommodation at a cost higher than the amounts that landlords would accept if the rent officers set rents at appropriate levels.

I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) about the need for co-ordination and for agency services. I have observed the activities of organisations such as the National Home Improvement Council, the neighbourhood revitalisation scheme and PROBE — the Partnership for the Renewal of the Built Environment. In many ways, they are precursors of the activities that I expect of the housing action trusts. If substantial proportions of private finance are introduced, as I believe will be achieved by the Bill, that must be accompanied by a high degree of co-ordination among the various parties

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involved. I therefore see the emphasis on an agency role as extremely important, not merely in the provision of finance but in the co-ordination which is equally essential.

I see the Bill as introducing a housing revolution. Many entrenched attitudes will have to change, but the Bill will offer choice, variety and freedom not hitherto experienced. I expect it to result in better housing opportunities not only in my constituency but for every family in the land.

8.7 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on his maiden speech. I am sure that his gracious tribute to his predecessor was much appreciated by all who were present when she was a Member. The hon. Gentleman's speech showed his deep interest in housing matters and I look forward to debating those issues further with him during this Parliament. The fact that there have been two other maiden speeches — those of the hon. Members for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) — and that so many new Members are keen to speak in the first major debate on housing in this Parliament reflects the importance of the subject.

I had assumed that a debate on housing policy would be introduced by the Government with an analysis of the housing needs of the people of our country and of the conditions in which they are expected to live, rather than stepping back a century and suggesting that the prime mover in housing policy is securing higher rents in the vain hope that this will lead to an increased supply of housing and property improvements. That did not work in the past and there is no evidence to suggest that it will provide solutions now. The history of housing development in Britain shows that high rents lead to squalid conditions and the need for public health legislation, to property speculation and to private profit by landlords. As the hon. Member for Gloucester reminded us, we need a sense of history. It is worth recalling that the history of rent controls, as outlined by the Secretary of State, is exactly paralleled by that of public health legislation because the rents taken from tenants were not used to improve conditions. Indeed, conditions became so bad that at the turn of the century our forefathers found it necessary to develop and promote publicly rented housing, available according to need.

The Bill has a narrower aim. Indeed, its first paragraph states that it is aimed

"at transforming the rented housing market".

It is worth asking the fundamental question: why was it transformed in the first place at the beginning of the century, and why was public sector housing developed on the basis of all-party political consensus? Surely we should not naively set the clock back, but recognise that it is ticking under a time-bomb of increasingly bad housing conditions and rising homelessness that threatens the inner cities and urban areas of late 20th century Britain.

I shall take first the issue of conditions. There is still a common assumption that the housing conditions that touched the public conscience with the television programme "Cathy Come Home" in the 1950s have been eradicated. The Government still persist in the view that the United Kingdom is "a well-housed nation". Indeed, that was stated in their manifesto. The Government have based their housing White Paper proposals on a rose-tinted view of housing conditions that are precisely contradicted by their own surveys. Only last January the Department of the Environment's research report on housing in multiple occupancy concluded:

"There are some exceedingly squalid conditions within houses in multiple occupation . . . their existence is an indictment of local and national housing policy".

However, the proposals in chapter 2 of the White Paper on repair and improvement to housing have been dropped between the publication of the White Paper and that of the Bill. It is not simply, as one Conservative Member said, that there is nothing about cowboys in the Bill. There is nothing in the Bill about improving the quality of Britain's housing. The Bill deliberately ignores all the evidence about the rapidly deteriorating state of Britain's housing stock.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has estimated that, in the private sector alone, repairs now cost £26 billion. A recent study by the National Economic Development Council put the price of repair in the private sector at £35 billion. It is worth reflecting that in 1975, 1·75 million homes in Britain were over 100 years old and by 1991 that figure will have doubled to 3·2 million.

When will we address the severe problems of disrepair, not least in the private sector? The national housing and dwelling survey records that 1·2 million homes are unfit for habitation, 1 million or more lack basic amenities and that about 4 million are classified as substandard. It is worth reflecting also that more than half the unsatisfactory dwellings are occupied by households whose head is over 60 years old. Declining housing stock is occupied primarily by the elderly.

In my own city of Leeds 52,500 private sector dwellings are now substandard and in need of improvement, and 19,000 are unfit. The reason is the legacy of back-to-back houses in the city. Those are precisely the private rented houses that led the local authority to embark on programmes of renewal, improvement and replacement in the 1920s and 1930s. The figure for private, unfit houses in Leeds lacking basic amenities is 1,800. That contrasts with the number of local authority houses that lack basic amenities, now 490, as a result of improvement programmes. There is a stark contrast between the improvement record in the public sector in Leeds and that in the private sector.

I invite the Government to address the hard facts about housing and to provide some hard evidence to demonstrate that tenants' conditions will be transformed before they press ahead with legislation to deregulate all new lettings. The Secretary of State said earlier that he was interested in that issue, so when will the Government bring forward proposals to strengthen local authorities' duties and powers to require decent safe standards in the private sector and in houses that are in multiple occupation?

If the Bill does not address the condition of the housing stock, dare we ask whether it addresses people's needs for decent and appropriate housing? I have found it astonishing that the one word that did not appear either in the consultative White Paper or in the Bill was the word "homelessness". Last year, over 103,000 families were officially accepted as homeless by local authorities in England alone. That does not include homeless single people or childless couples who are not legally entitled to

be registered as homeless with their local authority. The Bill fails to address the issue of homelessness and, in effect, does not offer homeless people anything.

In my own city of Leeds, at the end of September, 21,800 people were on waiting lists and a further 16,500 people were on a list to be transferred to a decent and appropriate home. I advise Conservative Members who say that that is simply the result of a failure of management by local authorities that it may instead have something to do with the fact that there is a shortage of decent and appropriate homes in our large cities. However, the Government have successively resisted all attempts to quantify housing needs. I invite the Government seriously to consider setting performance indicators for their policies to demonstrate to the country, in precise terms, that they are tackling Britain's housing needs. I need to be able to go home from the House and reassure the hundreds of constituents who come to me as their Member of Parliament that they have a chance that, in the near future or before they die, they will be offered a decent and appropriate home.

The Bill does not address conditions and needs, but simply states its intention to transform the rented housing market. The Bill's purpose is to attempt to open up housing in Britain to the big bang of the unfettered market. That belief in the magic of the market characterises the Bill. The Secretary of State seems determined to revive the word "rent". He has gone on record as saying:

"New investment can"—

he did not say will—

"be undertaken by the private sector but the whole thing is going to be infinitely more difficult at present rent levels".

There is an almost obsessional view that low rents are the cause of the dereliction of much of the country's public and private housing. However, in the statements that I have heard from the Secretary of State, there has not been any recognition of the need for investment in public and private housing. Higher rents are explicitly acknowledged as the impact of the Bill. The explanatory and financial memoranda state:

"The proposals in Part I of the Bill will result in higher rents for new tenancies".

The question is, who will be able to pay those rents? As some of my hon. Friends have pointed out, it will certainly not be young workers or those on lower wages. For example, nurses looking for private rented accommodation will face rents that they cannot afford.

I shall be interested to know from the Secretary of State what work has been done to assess market rent levels, because there has been some suggestion that in London they could be between £200 and £250 per week, and in Leeds between £70 and £80 per week. That envisages a massive increase in rents. In the future, how will homeless people be able to find housing at a price that they can afford, either through their income or through housing benefit?

Market rents will often be higher than the cost of home purchase. As the Halifax Building Society pointed out in its regional bulletin No. 13:

"Any new private housing built for rent will be as highly priced as housing for sale where there is a rising demand and in areas such as the south-east of England, the market will not supply homes for rent to meet the needs of people like skilled workers, young people on low incomes, or other groups, swelling council house waiting lists."

In other words, where people are too poor to exert economic demands, the private sector will not supply their needs. We cannot claim that their needs will be met because their rent will be covered by housing benefit when the DHSS has given absolutely no assurances that housing benefit will be increased.

Again the explanatory and financial memoranda state that there will be

"some increase in housing benefit expenditure."

That statement is contrary to the measures brought to the House a week ago which introduce reductions in housing benefit and make no allowances for this Bill. The Secretary of State said that housing benefit contributions would be reduced where property was not of a quality of a sufficiently high standard. Is he saying that tenants must pay over the odds for under-investment by landlords? Is he saying that tenants will pay a high price for the squalid conditions of their home?

Other hon. Members referred to the Quality Street initiative of Nationwide Anglia to provide inner-city housing for rent, but when asked on the radio whether it would be necessary for him to assume a high level of housing benefit, Mr. Tim Melville-Ross said that it would indeed be necessary to have sufficient housing benefit support to make the schemes feasible. One cannot have one without the other, even under the scheme which the Secretary of State has highlighted as the flagship.

The fallacy of the claim that allowing landlords to charge higher rents will result in better conditions is exposed by the research of the Department of the Environment. It showed that most such lettings were unprotected by the Rent Acts and were mainly only temporary lettings; that most occupiers had only one room and were sharing bathrooms and toilets; and that there were severe problems of disrepair, unfitness, damp and inadequate fire precautions.

The truth is that most private landlords are not providing a social service, nor are they sharing, nor letting their spare houses, certainly not in terms of providing secure, satisfactory rented homes at reasonable rents and especially not for those on low incomes. Their prime motive is to maximise profits from rental income and future capital gains. The decline in public-sector investment has certainly not been replaced by private-sector investment, although rents are at an extremely high level.

Behind the Bill's proposals is the idea that the private rented sector should be transformed to adjust to the needs of the market. There seems to be an uncritical willingness to bow before the false idol of the unfettered market. That is the dogma that lies behind the Bill.

The Bill fails to recognise Britain's housing crisis or to accept people's housing needs. I cannot see how the provisions will result in a significant, new supply of homes or how it will tackle rising homelessness. Rather, the provisions will lead to a redistribution of the existing supply of homes. Those who are able to pay higher rents will be able to mount an effective market demand, but at the expense of those who cannot pay. The price of housing will be forced up. There is no guarantee that people on low incomes will be able to pay the price of housing, nor is there a guarantee that housing standards will be improved.

I am reminded of the slogan that the Conservative party took as its banner in 1983—"The Resolute Approach". I was interested in the word "resolute", so I investigated where it came from. It was introduced from Norman French and in early documents it meant a severe and fierce determination to get rents in with the ultimate penalty of

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death. What an irony. The resolute approach seems to be the hallmark of a Bill which does nothing to address the housing crisis that faces thousands of people.

8.24 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on his thoughtful and perceptive maiden speech. The House will appreciate his generous and well deserved tribute to his predecessor, and the eloquence of his advocacy for his constituency and the interests of his constituents. We welcome the breadth of the experience and expertise which he brings to the House and look forward to hearing him contribute frequently to our deliberations.

I also warmly welcome the Bill. The Housing Act 1980 offered council tenants the right to buy their homes, but an oversight in drafting denied that right to the majority of Southwark council tenants who live in my constituency, as the Act provided that only where a council held the freehold interest could the tenant force it to sell. The unwillingness of the coucil to waive that right, which it could have done, and its insistence on standing on that technicality, meant that a large number of my constituents had to wait up to five years before having the opportunity to buy. It was only with the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 that the right was extended to tenants of councils with a leashold interest. Since then, there has been no great improvement or enthusiasm by Labour-controlled Southwark council to sell homes to tenants who wish to buy. Indeed, protestations that it is now Labour party policy to encourage this are not borne out in my constituency.

This raises the problem of delay on a technicality. A large number of my constituents are tenants of leasehold properties where the lease has only a short term to run. The position may be unique in London and in the country. The largest landowner is Alleyn's College of God's Gift. In the past, they have granted, sometimes for 99 years and sometimes for less, a ground lease on a piece of land. In some cases, the council built on that land and in others it bought properties with short-term leases. Many of my constituents are tenants of Southwark council where Southwark coucil owns a lease of less than 21 years, holding it from the estates governors of Dulwich college. They are denied the right to buy.

I understand from informal overtures to the estates governors that they would be prepared to negotiate the freehold reversionary interest which lies behind that of Southwark council, if Southwark council were willing to facilitate the opportunity for individual tenants to purchase. This Bill will ensure a wider choice of tenancy, home ownership and tenure to all. Although that is not the prime purpose of the Bill, it could with adaptation cover this issue. It is a small point nationally, but is of crucial interest to a large number of my constituents.

Another aspect of the delay worries me. It seems unfair that tenants who applied at the proper time to purchase, but where no action has been taken by the local authority, sometimes for a year, 18 months or even two years, continue to pay rent while at the same time the valuation of their property increases. Before this Bill is enacted, I hope that there will be an opportunity to provide for those tenants. When the appropriate time for action to be taken by the council on their application arrives, I hope that, from that time onwards the valuation is fixed and that any subsequent rent payment is paid to a stakeholder or a deposit holder or held in a trustee account on behalf of the tenant. Therefore, when the time comes to complete the purchase the rent paid in that interim period, with accrued interest, can be used to discharge part of the purchase payment.

It has also been argued that there are insuperable difficulties with regard to providing proper management costs broken down estate by estate. That may be a confession of failure on the part of local authorities. However, if that is an insuperable problem or one that will cause considerable delay, surely this Bill is an opportunity to bring in professional estate managers to advise and to cost the sums to which the services will amount. I believe this is a reform that should be made.

I wish to pay particular attention to the right of the council tenants, if they do not wish to buy, to choose their landlord. I have already mentioned an oversight in the drafting of the Housing Act 1980 that denied the tenants of Dulwich their right to buy. From my reading of the present Bill, I wonder whether there has been a similar oversight. In particular, I refer to clause 86, which lays down that any tenant of a freehold landlord will have the right to choose another landlord. However, a large number of Southwark tenants in Dulwich are not tenants of a freehold landlord. They are tenants of Southwark, the leasehold landlord that holds ground leases from Dulwich college. In those circumstances, does it mean that those tenants would be denied the right to change or to choose a new landlord? I believe that the Bill, as presently drafted, does just that, and I believe that that will cause great problems.

One instance of such problems is represented by the Kennolds estate on Croxted road. The ground landlord of that estate is Dulwich college and the leasehold landlord is Southwark council. Individual tenants on that estate would be unable to change their landlord within the terms of the Bill. We must pay attention to this problem before the Bill is enacted.

Another problem that exists in my constituency and perhaps nowhere else arises where Southwark council is the ground landlord and there is a head lessee, a housing association. In this instance I wish to refer to the Ruskin park housing estate. That estate was built in the 1960s by the London county council and was subsequently held by the Greater London council. In about 1972, a number of tenants wished to buy their individual flats on that estate and they clubbed together to form a housing association. The GLC granted the Ruskin park housing association a long leasehold interest of some 99 years. Therefore, the tenants who bought their flats became 99-year leaseholders.

However, those tenants of the GLC who wished to remain tenants found themselves in the position envisaged by this Bill. That is to say, the whole shooting match was granted, by way of long lease, to the Ruskin park housing association and, for those tenants who wished to remain GLC tenants, individual flats were leased back to the GLC. That arrangement was extremely successful from 1972 until almost the present day.

On the demise of the GLC, the freehold interest that lay beneath the Ruskin park housing association long lease could have been—in my opinion, it should have been—sold to that housing association by the London residuary body. However, that interest was transferred to

Southwark council, which became ground landlord. Therefore, at present Southwark council is ground landlord, Ruskin park housing association is head lessee, from which some individual flats are leased on long leases by owner-occupiers, and a small proportion of flats are still occupied by what were previously GLC, now Southwark, tenants.

The unexpired term of the lease on such flats is now 70 years and that lease is a wasting asset. Owner-occupier tenants are faced with great difficulty when trying to sell on the open market, because financial organisations such as mortgage corporations and building societies are not anxious to accept security of such a short duration. Therefore, we are faced with the anomaly whereby the owner-occupiers, those who have entered into a contract of home ownership, have a wasting asset that is extremely difficult to sell. We are faced with the curious situation that might allow those who are Southwark council tenants to choose a landlord different from Southwark council. It gives a spurious sense of superiority or advantage to those council tenants who wish to exercise their right to choose their landlord in those circumstances. Therefore, it militates against those who are owner-occupiers.

I have outlined two problems where there is a delicate balance between the leasehold and the freehold interests. In years gone by, a leasehold was a versatile way of organising tenure while at the same time maintaining the cohesion of an estate. That balance has been a problem that has bedevilled my constituency in recent years. The beneficent landlord, Dulwich college, developed the practice of granting ground lease to individuals. When those leases began to come to an end, that practice caused some conflict.

Twenty years ago, my constituency predecessor—my political opponent, but personal friend — Sam Silkin, now Lord Silkin of Dulwich, played an important part in the deliberations of this House considering the introduction of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. That Act was introduced to enable those who are long lessees of houses to have the right to enfranchise and obtain a freehold interest so that they may feel that they will not lose their capital asset at the end of the term of the lease.

That problem has arisen again now, in a slightly different form. The House should consider another estate within Dulwich, the estate on Farquah road, Grenville court and Marlow court. The tenants of that estate have made representations to me because they feel that, under the present freehold-leasehold balance, they share the same difficulties of the owner-occupiers on the Ruskin park housing estate. They have leases that have 70 years to run—originally they were for 99 years. Those leases do not represent a marketable asset. Many of the tenants in that estate are retired.

Those retired tenants have contemplated using one of the financial devices that are now available for the retired with a capital asset, such as the home income plan. However, they have discovered that financial organisations are not prepared to accept a lease that has a declining term to run when considering the anomalies that have arisen as a result of well-intentioned but incomplete legislation.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): My constituency has similar problems of leasehold enfranchisement. I understand that building societies will lend money in the circumstances described by the hon. Gentleman where the lease has more than 50 years to run. The rule normally applied by the building societies is that, provided that 25 years remain beyond the term of a normal mortgage, the property is regarded as a mortgageable asset. Serious problems arise when mortgages have fewer than 50 years to run.

Mr. Bowden: I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. But such a lease is a wasting asset and becomes less marketable. I have no doubt that there is a market and that some institutions will fund such purchases, but that does not have the same freedom as the open market asset. If there was an extension of leasehold enfranchisement flats, we could make progress in this difficult area.

An interesting concept in the Bill is that it almost admits the existence of a tenure which relates to freehold interests in flats. For years, there has been a philosophical debate about whether the flying freehold exists — whether one can have a freehold that does not sit on the earth's surface. But the tone of the Bill suggests that one could have a freehold stacked on top of another freehold. If that concept was accepted, there would be no reason not to enfranchise flats and thereby obviate the problems being experienced by my constituents in Grenville court and Marlow court. It is a serious issue because of the wasting asset, but it is even more serious psychologically when someone of advancing years has a diminishing lease. We must try to reassure that person by finding a solution to the problem.

Mr. Fraser: When the Labour party tabled an amendment in exactly those terms to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, why did not the hon. Gentleman vote for it?

Mr. Bowden: I am talking about this case. I have neither the memory not the expertise of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) in this area, but I believe that we could extend the right in such circumstances. The hon. Gentleman and I share views on the broad issues in many respects, but we differ on some matters of detail.

The Bill is a great step forward and offers wider choice. It provides a vehicle for righting some of the oversights and anomalies in the law, and I hope that in Committee it will be amended to deal with even more inadequacies and anomalies. I welcome it warmly.

8.42 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Earlier today, during questions on overseas development, we talked about starvation and the tragic circumstances of Ethiopia. If, during those brief exchanges, an hon. Member had suggested that our policy towards starvation should be to feed the fat and starve the lean, it would have been rejected out of hand. But Government housing policy is exactly that: helping those who have and depriving those who have not. Indeed, if one drew an analogy with starvation, it would not be going too far to suggest that the Government's cure for starvation is to cut supplies of food. During the past eight years, the Government have talked about a shortage of homes to rent. But Government policy and cuts in the housing investment programme have meant the loss of more than 500,000 homes to rent which would have been provided by local authorities had they continued the rate of building that existed in 1979. The

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trouble with the Bill is that it does nothing to assist those who are in the greatest need. Indeed, it continues the policy of rewarding the haves and punishing the have nots.

One example is mortgage interest relief. If an unmarried couple takes out a mortgage of £60,000 and pays tax at the higher rate, it will receive a subsidy towards repayment of the mortgage of £3,600 per annum, or £63 a week. Even if they were standard rate taxpayers, they would receive a subsidy of £1,620 a year. I mention £60,000 because it is about the cheapest price at which someone could buy a one-bedroomed flat in my constituency. That is about the rock-bottom price in Norwood, even in the more difficult parts. I am not talking about council houses, but about ordinary conversions of Victorian dwellings.

If we had assured tenancies in similar premises, with people starting homes for the first time no landlord would rent those premises at a return of less than 10 per cent. over what he has paid. I cannot imagine that the Government will give a subsidy to the needy couple of £3,600 per annum. They will get only a pittance of housing benefit on such a rental. That is another example of the Government feeding the fat and starving the lean.

This year, mortgage interest relief will give a revenue subsidy of about £5 billion to those who, on the whole, are fairly well housed. I am talking not about first-time purchasers or people at the lower end of the market, but about people who are fairly well housed, many of whom took out their mortgages some time ago. The subsidy on mortgage interest is about two and a half times the capital investment which will be permitted to local authorities—about £2,000 million in the current year.

Another example of massive Government investment which aids the haves and penalises the have nots can be seen in docklands. I welcome the revitalisation of docklands, but money has been poured into homes which are changing hands, not at £60,000 but at £250,000. The Government have diverted—almost perverted—housing investment in favour of the haves and against the have nots.

Private housebuilding has grown during the past eight years, but there have been deliberate inhibitions on building and improving homes which will be available for people to rent. The drift of Government policy is not to address the serious problem of needy cases, but to reward those who are already relatively well-endowed. Homelessness is only the tip of the iceberg of the cold comfort which is meted out to those in serious housing need. I say "the tip of the iceberg" because 100,000 people accepted as homeless, 200,000 people applying to be treated as homeless and 6,000 to 7,000 a night in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London are bad enough. There is a much larger housing problem, which the Bill does not cover, of about 1 million people living in homes that are unfit for human habitation and, according to the Government's figures, almost 2 million people are homeless in the sense that they want homes of their own and stand no reasonable chance of getting one.

The Bill will add to the near nomadic and despairing mass of people to whom housing policy should be addressed, but who are not addressed by this Bill, or by any other Government statements on housing policy during the past two years. Instead of providing access to housing, the Government put more bars on the cage which encloses many people in housing need.

The vast majority of British people are reasonably well housed and financed. The first priority should be to provide access for all people to affordable housing of a reasonable quality in the right place. Neither tenure, the landlord or other considerations matter as long as there is access to housing of reasonable quality at a reasonable price. The second priority should be to improve the quality of existing housing so that occupants are more content with what they have. One of our housing problems is the fact that people are not content with the houses in which they live.

The third priority should be to improve the physcial quality of housing by grants to owner-occupiers, or by making capital available to local authorities to improve the environment and the standards of management of their homes. We all recognise—my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) emphasised this—that there has at times been massive investment which has brought about great disaffection with housing because of the way in which people behave towards their environment and partly because of the way in which it behaves towards them.

The Bill should address itself to the problems of housing need, but it does not. It will intensify the ghettoisation of many of our estates. In my constituency, and in places such as Southwark and Lewisham, the pick-a-landlord scheme will not have the effect of people living in the worst managed and sometimes neglected housing opting out of the system through pick-a-landlord. Those who live in the best-managed, best-maintained and best-designed accommodation will tend to opt out, to leave the residue even more on the margin than before. That is exactly what the right to buy has done. It presents a serious problem in places such as London, in which there is a grave shortage of housing to rent; it has taken out the best and made the residue even worse than before, leaving little hope for the survivors.

The best that one can say about assured tenancy is that it is not quite as catastrophic as it might have been if it had been designed in the context of the Rent Act 1957. There is security of tenure and an appeal against an unreasonable market rent, based on the experience of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, which applies to business tenancies. I have several hard criticisms to make. First, the Government have departed from what could have been a bipartisan policy on assured tenancies. Previously, we had an agreed policy of having approved landlords; assured tenancies were linked to new investment in housing; and there was also security of tenure.

In almost every other sphere of public welfare, we approve or disapprove of people. We disqualify people who do not drive their cars properly on the road, just as, under the old assured tenancy, we could disqualify a landlord who was not up to scratch. That has gone by the board. If people do not run a cafeteria correctly and affect public health, they can be disqualified, too, as can those who run food shops or food factories. So why cannot we have a continuation of an assured landlord principle, whereby this House approves the landlord and lays down that he should be qualified to provide a certain quality of housing—which is not something that everyone can do? The Government have abandoned that bipartisan approach to assured tenancy and with that departure goes any possible support for their present innovation.

Secondly, the Government have repeated the mistakes of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, by laying a

minefield of legal traps. Under clause 6, if a tenant does not, within one month, serve a counter-notice disputing the revised rent put forward by the landlord, that rent is binding upon him. If a tenant is lucky enough to benefit by renewed prosperity, and goes away for a month, he can come back to an unpleasant surprise and find that his rent has been raised in his absence without the possibility of appeal. I ask the Government not to re-lay the minefield for business tenants in a statute dealing with residential tenants, who have less experience in dealing with legal matters.

Thirdly, the assured tenancy cannot possibly help people in need. I cannot see those in need in my constituency being able to afford what I think will be a minimum rent of about £120 a week. The golden rule will operate: the higher the cost, the lower the space. People will take tenancies that they cannot afford, or space that is insufficient for their needs and, in a year or so, they will be back in the homeless queue and the local authority will be left to pick up the pieces. No doubt, the Government will then starve the local authority even more of resources, and then blame it for its so-called incompetence. The consequence of assured tenancy, and even at the lower end of the market of the new shorthold unsecured tenancy, will be to increase the growth of homelessness and intensify the ghettoisation and despair of those at the bottom of the housing ladder.

Housing associations have a good record. They have been sensitive to social needs, have provided mainstream housing and have acted experimentally — for example, rehabilitating people coming out of mental institutions, and so on. They usually work on the principle of 100 per cent. nominations from their local authorities, which is wholly absent from the arrangements of housing action trusts and pick-a-landlord schemes. Almost the worst aspect of those is that the housing action trusts and the pick-a-landlord arrangements will mean opting out of any access for housing in those schemes for those on the housing waiting list. The Bill will pull away and distance the associations from their target customers — those in greatest housing need. It will steer associations towards the better endowed, and deprive them of access to funds for low-cost housing to meet the real needs in our community.

Absent from the Bill altogether is anything to do with empty property. I am sure that many hon. Members know of that problem in their inner-city urban areas. Landlords keep property empty for a year or two at a time. In a way, the Government are right, in inner-city areas, to stimulate the idea of land being put on to the market. There is no excuse for a local authority, housing association or private home owner to keep empty a property that could be made available for housing accommodation. If the Government want more housing for letting, why do they not compel the sale of homes that are in private hands and are often neglected for years, much to the disadvantage of owner-occupiers or tenanted neighbours who resent the blight in their roads that results from deserted premises?

At the end of the day, the Bill is irrelevant to housing needs — especially of people in London. In London we face an economic and social catastrophe in housing such as we have not had for a long time. In my constituency house prices have nearly doubled in a year. That means that not only people at the lower end of the market and the homeless are disadvantaged and have no access to housing, but nurses at my local hospital, teachers in our local schools and social workers for the local authority cannot get housing. Even people in middle income groups — skilled and semi-skilled — cannot gain access to housing because of the way in which the Government have cut back on the housing investment programme. Nothing in the Bill will help. The Government are reinforcing the deprivation of a lost generation, particularly in urban areas such as London.

I looked through my advice bureau on Friday night and examined the housing case of each person that came to ask me what the Bill will do for him or her. A nurse told me that she cannot carry on as a theatre sister because of appalling housing conditions. The Bill will do nothing for her. What will it do for the family living in overcrowded private accommodation which cannot go on the housing waiting list? What will it do for a woman who could not come to my bureau on Friday because she is a patient in Maudsley hospital? She has been driven mad by the operation of housing policy in London. She wants to be near her mother, and away from a lonely existence in which she has no friends. She is a young tenant, although there are many elderly tenants who would like to be with their children because it would save their lives.

There is nothing in the Bill or in Government policy that helps those in the greatest need. I should have thought that there was no greater indictment of the Government's housing policy than their ability to stare the problem in the face and ignore it.

8.58 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Throughout this Parliament, there will not be a more important Bill, nor more important issues than those debated today. In that I agree very much with my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), whose maiden speech was first class and in whose constituency, before moving to Portsmouth, I lived when his predecessor represented it so well in the House.

The supply of adequate food, clothing and shelter at an affordable price is fundamental to the basic needs and comforts of everyone. While we have been much more enlightened on food and clothing, the provision of shelter, to which we are returning with another Housing Bill, has been bedevilled by controlled markets, restrictions and rationing — perhaps indispensable in war time, but having little connection with reality in a free country in a long period of peace and with rising prosperity.

The Bill takes significant steps in the right direction. In Portsmouth, many of the initiatives proposed are already under way. While there is much to be done and there is no room for complacency, I have never before come across a council that is so loosely attached to dogma and so widely receptive to any sensible ideas for action that will result in meeting housing needs. Such needs exist in Portsmouth as in the constituencies of other hon. Members.

Portsmouth has been selling council houses since 1953, a whole generation before it became fashionable and then compulsory to do so. Many thousands have been sold. Over 22,000 council-owned houses remain and while, in recent years, new build has concentrated on the ever popular warden schemes for the elderly, there has been a steady addition of more general housing. But it was recognised long ago that the private sector had a major part to play in the provision of homes.

Portsmouth council has a constant programme of home maintenance and improvement, and it is wholly convinced

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of the justice of the criticisms — as I am, and as are many hon. Members on both sides of the House—of the badly designed, ill-suited mass developments, which it is now widely accepted add to rather than reduce social problems.

At one time I lived in Exeter, in the middle of a housing estate that was built all around the farm of which my father was the tenant. He was a councillor for that housing estate and for one further down the road that was also in his ward——

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): A very good councillor he was, too.

Mr. Martin: My hon. Friend is right. I can tell the House about my first-hand experience and my feeling that it was wrong to develop a mass of council houses in one place in those days. The sale of council houses has done more than anything else to produce the mix of ownership that there should have been from the start in such housing after the war.

Portsmouth city council has shown great courage, particularly in facing up to major development and in getting rid of much of the unacceptable mass housing. There has been new construction at Portsea. The council has also completely demolished Portsdown park, which received the experts' plaudits in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but which has been a complete disaster in human terms — precisely the sort of disaster that was so eloquently referred to by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

I have no doubt that Portsmouth city council will endorse positively the propositions set out in the Bill, particularly that the council should play an increased enabling role in encouraging houses for all provided by the public and the private sector, as well as by housing associations. That should be done undogmatically. We want homes from wherever they come.

In Portsmouth, as in many other places, we want to see an end to too much reliance being placed on bed and breakfast accommodation. While it no doubt has a role as a temporary expedient, it should have no part to play in longer-term needs, particularly those of families, whether single parents or not. My surgery, like those of other hon. Members, is full of people coming in with their housing problems. If anybody thinks that we are not as genuinely interested in sorting out those problems as anybody else, they must live in cloud cuckoo land. The DHSS-funded bed and breakfast accommodation, the bed and breakfast DHSS-funded house — whatever one may call it — is unacceptable. The Bill should help in ending that because the present legislation has given rise to that unacceptable face of housing.

The city council for many years has been working in co-operation with the Portsmouth Housing Association, the Care and Repair Service and the Southlands Housing Association. I cannot speak too highly of the professional approach of those Associations in contributing deep sincerity and practical solutions to the problems of homelessness, disrepair and underinvestment to which the present state of the law contributes so lamentably in Portsmouth as elsewhere and about which the Government are attempting to do something in the Bill.

While some people in housing associations are worried that their essential and original objectives might be compromised, and some are inclined to view the Tory Government with suspicion, even when they are bearing gifts, I have no doubt that they will take up positively the new powers and responsibilities offered to them and will involve their tenants increasingly in their operations. At the moment councillors can take up their problems, if they are in the council sector, and the housing associations must ensure that they have good contacts with their tenants, and that their hopes and aspirations are met.

The system of grants for home repairs and improvements has inbuilt delays which should be investigated and improved. Housing associations would very much welcome less bureaucracy in that respect.

The part of the Bill which has the potential to enable the greatest provision of more homes relates to the private rented sector. I do not claim that it is the ultimate panacea in providing homes, but it will have an important and useful role if its future is uninhibited by the excessive legislative control which has existed for some 70 years. I give the Bill eight out of 10 because it goes a great way towards removing those barriers which have existed for so long.

A moment of cool reflection should tell even the most dense person that greater harm has been done, not just to landlords or property owners, but to countless tenants and would-be tenants, by the non-availability of property to let, by so much property being inadequately improved and maintained, and by severe restrictions being placed on personal mobility and unnecessarily complicated legislation and case law. Little of the case law is in language which can be understood by a normal person, let alone a Fellow of All Souls, but it applies to virtually every step in a dangerous minefield. We have had Act after Act and case law after case law. When I practised at the Bar I tried to understand some of it — when I had to for a particular case—and with relief I forgot it as soon as I could when the case was over.

In a rational world, to alleviate all this would not be a matter for deep party political controversy. It is profoundly depressing that the Opposition parties do not have any answers to reform the Rent Acts or to the provision of private rented accommodation and the contribution it could make to solving housing problems. Part of the responsibility carried by Conservative Members, in supporting the Government, is that people can look only to us for real solutions to those problems by a partnership between all agencies which is undogmatic. When Government Members have proposed that it is undogmatic, we have had a reaction from the other side —but it is undogmatic.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If the hon. Gentleman agrees with increasing the supply of rented accommodation to solve the housing problems he sees at his surgeries or advice bureaux, why for doctrinaire reasons are he and his Government against increasing the supply of public accommodation?

Mr. Martin: The supply of public rented accommodation has been increasing. If the hon. Member comes to Portsmouth, I will show him scheme after scheme. If it is not happening in his area, he should question his council. People will get no new ideas whatever from the Labour party, which remains hostile to all but the public provision of housing for rent. We have just heard that from the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). The Opposition are

bankrupt of ideas and want nothing but massive subventions of public money while preserving as intact as possible the stock in trade of local politicians—votes through dependency and housing rationing. That is what they are wedded to.

For years the Opposition were against the sale of council houses. They said that it would not work and that they would not have it. They were saying that even while party voters, party members and councillors were buying them like hot cakes. That continuing attitude was exemplified in the sterile and depressing speech by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) who opened the debate and set the scene for all his hon. Friends.

We heard the spokesman for the Liberals. That party's policy on housing, as on many other things, keeps up with events. The Liberals are against reforms such as the sale of council houses, until they are seen to work and until —what is more important to Liberals—they are seen to be popular. When that happens, hey presto, they are all on board telling their local electorate that it was always a Liberal idea anyway. They say that on the basis of some obscure 19th century Gladstonian principle, or extract it from the musings of Lloyd George who had plenty of time to muse in the 1920s and 1930s.

During the betrothal period—if I may call it that—of the Liberals and the prototype SDP they managed to agree at last that Tory practices and ideas, many of which, including housing associations, are extended in the present Bill, were good things. That is in the Liberal's motion and it was in the speech by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). It remains to be seen what the other SDP, the one led by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), will come up with in its new slimline form. I do not see the right hon. Gentleman's name on the Order Paper above the motion in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. We shall have to wait to see what the right hon. Gentleman comes up with. The right hon. Member for Devonport rather reminds me of a legendary fish called the aspidochelone. That legendary fish fools mariners into believing that its back is an island and, when they are all crammed upon it, it submerges and drowns them all. None of the Opposition parties will tackle the rent Acts and so we must.

Mr. Simon Hughes: We would if we could.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman would if he could, but in wholly the wrong way. We must be bold and we will be bold.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) spoke about the sale of council houses. If we had tackled the sale of council houses on the basis that the Opposition did not agree with that policy, and would change it all back when they came to power, we should never have sold any. In that case, the countless number of people who now own homes and who represent a real shift in resources from the rich to the poor, from those who own to those who did not own, would never have taken place. That was opposed on every occasion until finally the Opposition could oppose it no longer.

The Bill could be bolder in terms of the assured shorthold tenancy, and we could leave rents to be freely agreed by market forces. In any case, the level of housing benefits will settle the matter. The Opposition hate it when we talk about market forces.

Mr. Morgan: Is the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) also opposed to market forces being applied to private mortgages? If he is, may we conclude that he is against mortgage tax relief?

Mr. Martin: Mortgage tax relief is a great incentive to home ownership and home ownership is the greatest freedom that we have ever had. I am in favour of continuing it. It harnesses market forces. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Laissez-faire".] We do not want everything to be laissez-faire.—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition want "Gooseberry Fair" with the Government constantly between what the people want and economic forces. For Opposition Members, it is gooseberry fair, rather than laissez-faire; the Government should be into everything. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martin: May I return to the point that I was making?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Martin: I was talking about market forces, which is what got the Opposition going. Market forces have led to no shortage of food or clothing. Market forces work in every other matter. One cannot do without food or clothing and in war time they were both rationed. The controls were lifted at the end of the war and now there is plenty of food and clothing to be had at reasonable and affordable prices. However, if one refers to market forces in relation to housing, you start to talk about dogma.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not keep referring to me.

Mr. Martin: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. I should have said that the Opposition parties start to get very excited.

The provision dealing with assured shorthold tenancies does not leave rents wholly to market forces. In any case, the level of housing benefits will settle matters. The market will soon notice at what level housing benefits are set. All the gurus will somehow work out what the level of housing benefit should or should not be. It is likely that, hey presto, market forces will come near to that level without the need for expert opinion from rent assessment committees—something that has happened over many years of restriction. As I said, the level of housing benefit will have a great effect on the rents market.

The Bill provides for the Secretary of State to designate areas where such rent fixing is not to apply. That provision should be altered. The Secretary of State should designate only the areas where it ought to apply. For assured shorthold tenancies, it should be assumed that rent fixing does not apply. I should like to see some changes in clauses 20 and 21 of the Bill.

I said that we should be bold. In ancient Athens, in the time of Pericles—I am sure that my hon. Friends, at least, will have heard of him—lived a gentleman called Artemon. He used to remain at home with two servants —probably of the civil kind and probably ex-members of the ADC—holding a shield of brass over his head in case anything should fall on him. I believe that the ways of Artemon have no place in the Department, and I am pleased to see that they do not have much place in the Bill. When the Bill is passed, Opposition Members, in the

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House and in the media, will delight in highlighting the way in which market forces are being exploited by ruthless and evil landlords.

Time and again, we have heard about Rachmanism. We have been told that we must not give rise to Rachmans again. None of us agree with the policies of Mr. Rachman and his boys. However, there will always be ruthless and evil landlords, just as there will always be ruthless and evil people—under Governments of any political complexion, in any country and in any political system. Any society has such people, just as it has the good and honest people.

Many more evil things will be done if we keep the controls and the stupid restrictions that we have had for so long, which have stopped many people having proper homes at reasonable, affordable market rents. I have no doubt that we shall be able to allow ourselves years because this is not a short-term Government. We have had nearly eight-and-a-half years and a further eight-and-a-half years will certainly be enough to cement this reform into the ways of the country. When the reform has been cemented, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said, the Opposition will accept it as the currency of practical politics, just as they have accepted the sale of council houses, and will not dare to get rid of it.

9.19 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Halfway through his speech the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) said that he occasionally goes to the bar. I wonder whether that is where he came from before his speech, because I have never heard so much irrelevant claptrap in all my life. Unfortunately, the reality of what he and his right hon. and hon. Friends are advocating is that it will maintain the twilight zone in this country between those who can afford to buy or choose their housing and those who, because of unemployment or poor wages, are increasingly being forced into a situation without any real opportunity to determine their living conditions or the type of housing in which they wish to live.

This Bill is about the erosion of rights. There is a subtle erosion of the rights of tenants in the private sector and a major erosion of the rights of local authorities in terms of working with housing associations and other agencies, both in the public and private sectors, to intervene in the housing market to determine the needs of the community, what resources will be allocated to public and private housing and how best those resources are applied. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said, Labour Members are not really interested in whose name is on the rent book or whether the accommodation is in the private or public sector. We want a real choice in housing for those who wish to buy or rent. This Bill erodes even the small choice available now.

As a member of a local authority before coming to the House, I am not going to apologise for the role being played by local authorities now and previously in the provision of housing. Much has been said by Conservative Members blaming local authorities for the current state of the housing market. The position would be infinitely worse if it was not for the role of the local authorities. I hope to describe my experience as a member of the local authority in Wigan.

One of the reasons for the problems that exist today is a historical one. In the 1960s, both Labour and Conservative Governments not only forced local authorities into system building but it was built into the grant system. Local authorities did not receive a grant for new build unless they built properties more than four storeys high. In addition, local authorities were forced to implement no fines concrete system developments and other untested and untried methods of construction. Today we see local authorities trying to cope with the multi-million-pound mistakes of those days while those responsible live out their retirement in Tenerife and other places. Those people were responsible for selling housing construction methods more akin to Mediterranean housing than that required in this country.

At present, local authorities such as mine are having to deal with the problems of the Government's erosion of investment in the public sector. Major problems in housing now are a direct result of the Government's policies over the past eight years. In the country as a whole, investment in public sector housing has been slashed by 75 per cent. and in my authority it has been slashed by 80 per cent. in real terms. In the last year of the Labour Government, our HIP grant was £19 million and this year it is £6·4 million. Not a single new house has been built since 1983. This year, our allocation for new build of £4·5 million has been cut to zero. That is in an authority left with a legacy of private sector mismanagement in terms of its housing stock.

The authority has set out in an imaginative way, along with housing trusts and housing associations, to try to change fundamentally the provision of housing in the public and private sectors in Wigan and the role of the residents in the private sector. The local authority has sat down with housing associations and residents in almost every part of the borough to set up housing action areas. Residents elect representatives for the local committees and, with the local authority, determine their refurbishment needs, both in property and the environment. Housing associations and building societies are sitting down with the residents and the local authority to determine the best way in which that refurbishment can occur. That is providing real choice in the private sector and providing public funding to maintain private housing stock.

In the main, that housing is occupied by the elderly and by tenants of absentee landlords. The latter have caused the local authority the greatest problem in improving private housing stock. Too often, after a programme of reinvestment and improvement, the only houses that have not been improved are those still in the hands of absentee landlords. These difficulties, which will continue to occur, show that private landlords are not in the ball game of investing in communities, improvements in the environment and property. They are concerned with high rents and making profits and running from these communities.

Despite massive grant cuts, the public sector's policy is to refurbish properties—heating, lighting and so on—and to relieve the serious problems of urban deprivation on estates. The local authority is sitting down with residents, who form residents' committees, to determine the estates' needs. That neighbourhood approach is being developed throughout the borough.

There are 17 authority estates earmarked, but that programme has been curtailed because of the Government's cuts in the housing investment programme.

Many council tenants are trapped in houses now too big for them because their family needs have changed; the authority wants to give them the opportunity to move to other accommodation so that their houses are used for those on the waiting lists.

Our priority estates programme aims to identify the problems and to find the necessary resources. It is about improving management techniques and involving other services in housing. The housing problems cannot be solved in isolation; they are part and parcel of the environment, socially and economically. Local authorities are taking up the challenge left by the Government's social policies. Where problems exist, they have been manifested, in the main, through housing. Direct action by local authorities in improving the environment in which tenants live will turn around the social problems on many estates. The Bill and the Government's attitude to investment in local authority housing make it infinitely more difficult for that change to occur.

If the Government were really serious in their argument that the sale of council houses provides additional resources for local authority investment, why do local authorities such as Wigan have millions of pounds tied up because of Government capital receipt controls? Those millions of pounds, obtained because local authorities have been forced to sell properties, cannot be used to alleviate their housing needs. If the Government were serious, they would allow local authorities to use those receipts for investment in the public and private sectors. The Government refuse to do that, so millions of pounds worth of assets, which could be utilised to the benefit of the housing stock, are locked away.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Does not the fact that capital receipts are available reduce borrowing, so that, in effect, the local authority has the use of such money?

Mr. McCartney: That is not—*[Interruption.]* I hope that my hon. Friends will allow me to answer that intervention in my own way. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) obviously does not understand the whole concept of Government expenditure controls on local authorities, especially those on capital receipts. That ignorance has been displayed by other Conservative Members during the debate. The controls on capital receipts have resulted in millions of pounds of resources not being spent on housing stock. Consequently, residents have to put up with poor conditions such as lack of heating and the need for rewiring and other refurbishments. My authority has already approved proposals to carry out that work, but the Department of the Environment will not approve the allocations.

My authority has an affinity with housing associations. It is a true partnership. The authority understands the needs of its community and involves housing associations in its housing strategy. The authority's area is divided into zones, each with a designated housing association. Within the overall housing policy, there is a range of options for people in both the public and private sectors, and resources are allocated on a 50:50 basis. In the housing action areas in the private sector, we are encouraging housing associations to provide low-cost rental accommodation. That is revitalising many parts of our area.

There are sheltered homes and homes with special facilities for pensioners, again provided on a 50:50 basis with housing associations; special housing for the disabled and paraplegics; and housing for single people and women's refuges. Currently we are constructing two specially devised places for the mentally disabled and one for the rehabilitation of offenders. The authority, working with the housing associations, is using its resources to diversify and give a real choice to those in need in the community. The Bill will undermine that.

We think that housing will become a bigger crisis than the National Health Service. We cannot view the Bill in isolation; it must be considered in the context of the debate on housing benefit regulations last week. Again, Conservative Members showed an ignorance or misunderstanding of, or a malevolence towards, £640 million being sucked out of the housing benefit system. It is the eighth cut in housing benefit since the Government took office and, as a result, the role of housing associations will be restricted. If we are not careful, it will change dramatically from its traditional role of providing housing for low or no-income groups.

Without major amendments to the Bill in Committee, housing associations will have to operate on a basis of market rents and who can afford to pay them, rather than on a basis of local housing needs. That has been regretted by the overwhelming majority of those involved in the housing association movement, including some Conservative Members.

The Department of Health and Social Security legislation places housing associations in an impossible position. The ending of fair rents for both new projects and existing homes when tenants move out will mean that those in greatest need will not be provided with alternative or affordable forms of housing.

There is another problem with those in the twilight zone, those who are neither eligible for housing benefit nor earning high incomes. These proposals will mean that up to 40 per cent. of their income will go on market rents. It will mean that many, particularly in the north, who want to move to other parts of the country to look for work will be unable to do so because of this legislation. Not only is this unacceptable; it is illogical to encourage people to move around the country in search of work and then, by this Bill, to make it financially impossible for them to do so. Forcing market rents on housing associations is highly irresponsible. We must return to this when the Bill goes into Committee.

Another concern of housing associations relates to the Government's concept of affordable rents. I am not totally in favour of housing associations and the concept of affordable rents, but it is one way in which housing associations are attempting to procure a compromise from the Government in regard to their current policy on rents and housing associations. When the Minister replies to the debate, I should be glad if he would comment on the proposals on affordable rents put to him by the housing associations, and say whether the Government will consider amendments to allow affordable rents for housing associations, which will ensure that we do not reach the position where working people are priced out of the market and cannot afford to come into new or rehabilitated property run by housing associations.

Housing association tenancies are another cause for concern. Here again, the Government are placing housing association tenants in a very different position from tenants in council and private accommodation. Housing associations are in neither the public nor the private sector,

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and the Government should recognise that. The Bill should be amended in Committee to include the principle of housing association tenancy to ensure that housing association tenants are protected in a real sense and do not find themselves in a different position from council tenants or tenants of private landlords. This is a major deficiency of the Bill, and I would welcome the Government's views on it. They have already received proposals from housing associations in relation to this omission, yet they have seen fit not to include in the Bill some safeguards for such tenants.

The Government are trying to change the way in which housing associations are funded. There is a real need to protect housing associations from fluctuation in the money markets. More and more will become involved in mixed funding schemes. There are some which will need flexibility in relation to the housing limits in terms of HAG. It is proposed that the limit will be 50 per cent., but this total inflexibility can cause difficulties, particularly for smaller housing associations when it comes to mixed funding schemes. Here again, the Government should allow some flexibility to make certain that, when this is introduced, the housing associations which become involved in these schemes over a period are not affected by market fluctuations when it comes to their long-term investment in new build and rehabilitation.

There are some items that I would like to see considered when the Bill goes to Committee. The first is the abolition of the grant redemption fund. This again is an area where housing associations should be allowed some leeway in the amount of rent money which is ploughed back into rehabilitation and new building projects. The Government's present proposals are restrictive in relation to such funds.

We would also like to see the Government review the revenue deficit grant for major repairs. The consultation paper suggested not only that revenue deficit grant be unavailable for future projects but that it should be phased out in respect of existing schemes. The housing associations recommend that this step should not be taken so that capital support can be provided over a period; this will make further payments of revenue deficit grant necessary for the long-term future funding of new build in the housing association sector.

My final point concerns the long-term relationship between local authorities and housing associations. Unfortunately, some associations have already made it clear that they are prepared to take advantage of the Government's proposals to try to pinch large parts of local authorities' housing stock. As a former member of a local authority who has had a good relationship with housing associations, developed in unison, I am sure that every Labour council will bitterly resist any attempt by housing associations to undermine the policies, principles and assets of local authority housing. Housing associations hoping to make a major capital gain in the short term should think again, because in the long term great damage will be done to the relationship built up between local authorities and housing associations.

9.40 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): It is appalling that only one Liberal Member has spoken in the debate, although the House will no doubt be expected to vote on the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). It is even more appalling when one considers that my predecessor, Mr. Stephen Ross, who is soon to be ennobled and given a seat in the other place, was responsible for the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which has done so much damage to local authority housing in this country. I should put on record at the outset that for some years I was a director of a building society. I was also chairman of a local authority housing committee. It is a source of great pleasure to me that, since I ceased to hold that office, but relating to that period, the Audit Commission has complimented the authority on the way in which it handled its housing stock.

It is significant and a sign of the social revolution that the Government have begun that in a debate on a topic so often regarded as the preserve of socialism, no fewer than three quite exceptional maiden speeches have been made by Conservative Members.

I welcome the fact that, although the housing benefit system is to continue, local authorities will be able to restrict benefit paid on unreasonable rents. Where rents are considered excessive by the rent officer, the subsidy paid to the local authority will be limited to the appropriate market rent for the dwelling in question. As a councillor, on several occasions I took up the fact that excessive benefit was being paid, in some cases as a result of artificially high rents established in back-to-back deals between landlord and tenant.

There are three areas in which the Bill does not go nearly far enough. My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) gave the Bill eight points out of 10. That was a reasonable score.

First, the Bill does not go far enough in terms of attracting private enterprise capital. The Government have an exceptional record in freeing the finances of building societies. Only last week, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary made an announcement enabling building societies to go out into the market place to increase their borrowing. As yet, however—I say that deliberately because there is more to be published on finance in connection with the Bill—the Bill does not seem to go nearly far enough in attracting pension fund finance. Pension fund managers look especially for capital growth. Sun Alliance was established in our town and, as the chairman of the housing committee, I looked for a formula that would attract pension fund finance to housing associations to give them the capital growth that they sought. That is perhaps even more important since the recent movements on the stock market. It is quite possible to encourage pension finance into housing associations because it is cash flow positive.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Is he aware that one major pension fund has interests in Holland and this country, but has 15 times the amount of money invested in housing associations for property for rent in Holland than in this country because of the restrictive provisions of the Rent Acts? Does my hon. Friend agree with the excellent provisions in the proposed legislation that remove those restrictions so that the British side of that pension fund can find it more attractive to release further funds for investment for the purpose that he described?

Mr. Field: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I was not aware of that information, but it

illustrates my point that there is a need to attract pension fund finance into private rented housing in this country. It will provide a dynamo to generate an increase in the range that is available to tenants. That is what we are seeking and is the raison d'etre of the Bill.

I appreciate that my next point is a narrow view and am sure that my right hon. Friend will be aware of that. However, I hope that when the Minister replies he will refer to it because it is of considerable concern to my constituents and to other hon. Members. I refer to the fact that the right to buy was not extended to deal with Greater London council holiday homes. Although I endorse fully the Government's view that the right to buy should not be extended to sheltered accommodation or to other specialist accommodation for disabled people — I am sure that most hon. Members can see the merit in that —there is no merit in continuing to deny the right to buy to occupants of GLC holiday homes which have since been transferred to the London residuary body.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Field: Yes, I should be delighted.

Mr. Winnick: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be delighted. As he is such an enthusiastic defender of the right to buy and wants to see it extended, even if I may say so in a farcical manner, is he in favour of private tenants having the right to buy their accommodation in law, regardless of any landlord and objection? If not, why not? What is the distinction between private tenants and other tenants?

Mr. Field: I am sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman suggest that it is farcical. My constituents would greatly resent that comment. Indeed, I think that I should call upon the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that statement. What is farcical about my constituents who have occupied GLC holiday homes on the Isle of Wight for about 10 years and who are pensioners wanting to buy those homes? Does the hon. Gentleman own his own home? I bet that he does. I am quite certain of it, but he thinks that that is farcical.

Mr. Winnick: I know that the Whips have probably told the hon. Gentleman to do a stint and to make it last, but having given way to me perhaps he will pay attention. I am asking him a simple question. If it is all right for tenants in the public sector to buy their own accommodation through the right to buy, what objection does he have, if any, to private tenants having the same right? It is a simple question, so let us have the answer.

Mr. Field: I am certain that I did not mishear the hon. Gentleman say that my suggestion, which was that the right to buy should be extended to GLC holiday home tenants, was farcical. I wonder why he thinks it farcical to allow pensioners who have occupied their holiday homes on the Isle of Wight for several years to have the same right to buy as other tenants in the public sector. There is nothing farcical about it.

Mr. Winnick: Answer the question.

Mr. Field: I should also like to address the question of——

Mr. Winnick: I have asked the hon. Gentleman a question.

Mr. Field: I have already given way twice to the hon. Gentleman. If he continues to interrupt, we shall never get through the business.

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has caused considerable problems in the management of local authority housing. The difficulties of bed-and-breakfast accommodation are well known and rehearsed. The terms of residency to be established under the Act are taken by most local authorities to be six months in a 12-month period. That usually proves a connection with a local authority. I ask my right hon. Friend to embody that custom and practice in this legislation and I suggest that the period should be 18 months. It would answer many of my constituents' problems if under that Act a local connection were established after 18 months.

Mr. Battle: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that there should be an 18-month residential qualification before one can register as homeless and that it is to be restricted to certain areas? How will he define those areas? If in one local authority area a landlord evicts a person and he crosses the street to the next borough, will he be disqualified from having a home?

Mr. Field: I shall come to that point. I checked this information with the Library and this has been my experience as chairman of a housing committee. It is the custom and practice among local authorities, although it is not embodied in the Act, that six months in a 12-month period normally establishes a local connection.

Many of my hon. Friends have considerable difficulty with that Act, particularly in seaside resorts where there is seasonal labour. Certainly the Act has caused considerable ill feeling on the Isle of Wight because many seasonal workers from elsewhere who man the hotels and operate the many attractions in our lovely resort — I urge all hon. Members to give us a visit—do not always go home at the end of the season. Within a short period they have established a residency occupation, such as I have described, and then find themselves made homeless because at the end of the season the hotel no longer provides them with accommodation. Within about 12 months they are accommodated by the local authority and by using the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 they have effectively jumped the queue and taken homes which would have been allocated to island residents or their children. That causes considerable local upset and concern.

I believe that we should go a little further with regard to the question of capital receipts. That question is continually exercised in this Chamber. The argument goes that, if the Government wish more and more housing to be built, why are the authorities, which have sold their housing stock through the right to buy, not allowed to use the capital receipts that they receive? I believe that my right hon. Friend should put an end to that argument by embodying in this Bill the repatriation of all capital receipts from local authorities to the Treasury. That would put an end to that debate once and for all.

For too long in this country landlords have been at a disadvantage. Often landlords have not been encouraged to let their properties. Indeed, on the Isle of Wight we have several large houses that could be put to better use. However, every time I speak to those constituents who are landlords they express their concern as to whether they will ever see their properties again. I am certain that the Bill

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will increase the level of private rented accommodation and provide the sort of choice that we wish to see for those tenants who do not own their properties, but who wish for a wider choice of rented accommodation than has been previously available.

I am especially delighted with the response that has already come from housing associations. They appear to be gearing themselves up to go out into the public sector and take over many of our council estates. Several Opposition Members have said that they believe that the Bill will work to the detriment of tenants. They believe that many estates that are not so well managed and whose housing stock is poor in comparison to others will be left in the ownership of local authorities, while those estates that are better managed and have newer housing stock will be taken away by housing associations. They believe that that change of landlord will come about as a result of the voting structure contained in this Bill that enables the tenants to vote for a change of landlord.

I do not believe that local authorities will be left with the more rundown estates. I believe that even the value of those estates will attract housing associations. I believe that many such older estates offer an attractive investment potential for housing associations. I believe that those associations will put themselves out to acquire such rundown estates and will believe that it is financially advantageous to do so.

I believe that the bulk of the Bill is welcome. I have already outlined the areas where it does not go far enough. I would register a score of eight out of 10 for the Bill, but a major disappointment is the fact that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 will not be amended within this Bill.

9.59 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) saw fit to tax the Opposition with the words of the late Aneurin Bevan. It is a foolhardy Tory who throws in our face the words of Aneurin Bevan. The hon. Gentleman said that he had heard Aneurin Bevan's speech in Blackpool, but he should have quoted his much more important speech on the first occasion that he addressed the House as Minister responsible for housing. That was a true analysis of our current housing crisis. I commend that instructive speech to the hon. Member for Eastbourne and to the House because it tells us a thing or two about our problems today.

Aneurin Bevan reminded the House then, and we should be reminded now, that the only way to deal with such a great housing crisis was to ensure that local authorities were properly resourced and marshalled. He promised to ensure that resources were made available to enable local housing authorities to do that. He did rather more than that. He identified the fact that that housing crisis owed much to the failure over many years of private finance, and especially speculative finance, to resolve the problems of housing need. Speculators cannot properly take on board all the housing needs of all our people. Bevan said that, at best, they can cater for the most well-off and the upper end of the housing market for rent and sale. That is the best for which one can hope from private speculation and from the market, which is raised to such great heights by the Government and which Conservative Members believe can tackle our housing problem.

Bevan pointed out the fallacy of relying on market forces and the need to mobilise and marshal the resources of local housing authorities to respond to local needs, as the market could never do. Most importantly, he mentioned the dangers of playing off local authorities against building societies. I shall quote this especially important part of his speech, and it is a pity that the hon. Member for Eastbourne is not here to hear how the man who he held out as a reproach to us would address the problems. Bevan said:

"The conflict will be—and I warn hon. Members of it—between public housing on the one hand and the moneylender on the other. Many of these agencies that started off as building societies are now nothing but money-lending societies."—[*Official Report*, 17 October 1945; Vol. 414, c. 1225.]

Those words echo the problem that we have today, and we would do well to heed them.

The Bill does not encourage a supportive relationship in which one sector complements the other, as the Opposition would like building societies and local authorities to complement each other. The Bill proposes that the role of local authorities will be undermined and that building societies will be encouraged to fill the vacuum. That is not in the long-term interests of building societies, nor is it in the interests—short, medium or long-term — of local authorities and of meeting the housing needs of our people. The Government should wake up to the fact that there is no easy answer to providing housing for rent. They are trying to delude the building societies and the House and are not addressing the deep-rooted problems of meeting housing needs.

Mr. Squire: Despite the hon. Gentleman's reservations, does he agree that it makes more sense for building societies to be involved in creating new properties, especially for rent, rather than recycling money to buy secondhand homes?

Mr. Boateng: We have never been opposed to creative schemes to unlock resources — to involve local authorities and building societies in joint enterprises. On the contrary, before it was abolished the GLC had a successful scheme in London with the Abbey National, and we were going to set up more such schemes up and down the country before the Government imposed restrictions on local authorities' capacity to enter into them. We have nothing against such co-operation, but it must be part and parcel of a much wider system that unlocks large amounts of resources to address the problem —not a piecemeal, ad hoc approach to a deep-rooted crisis. We do not believe that building societies hold out the answer to the needs of the private rented sector, so we do not intend to go down that road, either.

In so many ways, the Bill is typical of the Government's approach to all aspects of our problems in the inner cities. It is a combination of muddle on the one hand and the market on the other, with a great dollop of malice for good measure. Muddle, market and malice characterise the attitude of Conservative Members. *[Interruption.]* They do not like to hear that, and I do not blame them; I would not like it if it was addressed to me. However, that is the whole basis of their approach in the inner city; we do not buy it, and nor do the public.

I say "muddle", because there is no coherent vision in the Government's proposals of the future shape of housing provision in society. We want such a vision. We genuinely want a healthy private rented sector based on fairness and

equity, and in which there is no room for harassment of tenants and the winkler-out. We genuinely want a thriving sector that meets the real need of people who wish to own their own homes. The record of successive Labour Governments and local authorities bears that out. In that speech on 17 October 1945, when Aneurin Bevan addressed the House in a way that the hon. Member for Eastbourne would not have found attractive, he promised to make—and did make—moneys available to local authorities under the Small Dwellings Acquisition Act 1899. So, even in 1945, Labour was addressing these issues, as we have sought to address them in government and in local authorities, and as we shall try to address them again. It is right that people who want to own their own homes should do so, and be assisted to do so. There is a place in our vision for that, just as there is a place for those people who will never be able to afford their own homes, or who have reached a stage in their lives when owning a home is not feasible and who want decent accommodation to let in the public sector. That should be available as part of a coherent housing scheme and as part of a credible vision for homes for all our people.

At various stages of one's life, one needs different sorts of accommodation. When one is young and single, one needs readily available accommodation. When starting a family, one should be able to afford to buy a house at a price that a young family might be expected to pay—not the £75,000 to £80,000 that people in Brent, South have to pay for a little flat in which to start a home. We want local authorities to have the power to help people to buy their own homes. We also want rented accommodation to be available to meet people's needs at various times in their lives.

When one is elderly and looking for a place that is a bit smaller, when one is looking for support in the form of sheltered accommodation, and for a place that is integrated into a wider community, so that one is not separated into an old people's ghetto, but part of a housing estate in which old people play an integral part, have a role to play and are not isolated, such accommodation should be available, too. We should not have what I have at the moment in my constituency, with old people rattling about like peas in a pod, in four-bedroomed houses and three-bedroomed flats, who cannot get the housing that they want because of the restrictions outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) in his speech.

That is our vision for housing. How do we achieve it? One thing is sure. We do not achieve it by leaving it to the vagaries of the market, because there is no way in which it can cater for old people or for the young person seeking a start in housing. There is no way in which the market can cater for the special needs that we correctly identified as belonging to that area that is served best by housing associations.

We have not heard from Conservative Members—I wait to hear it from the Minister when he winds up—precisely how our housing associations will meet the needs of the mentally ill, the disabled, the young person at risk or the single mother in the way that we would have them meet those needs, if there are financial restrictions on raising money and the rents that they will be required to charge. How are those needs to be met under the new order that the Conservative party has decreed for housing? There has been a deathly hush among Conservative Members, who have given no answer to that question, and we now look forward to an answer. We shall press for an answer in Committee because all those who rely on us to meet their special needs demand it. They will not have the silence and smugness which characterise that which comes, I am afraid to say, from Conservative Benches.

Therefore, the housing associations' role should not undermine but complement the proper role of local authorities. In that regard, I refer the House to a scheme that deserves commendation. I hope that the Department of the Environment will take heed of it, and that it will seek to ensure that local authorities, in their new strategic role, whatever that is to mean, are not precluded from entering into an arrangement or partnership with housing associations. A new estate in Brent was opened last Thursday, providing homes for 600 people. Before that, those people had been in desperate housing need, and were among the 800 families from my constituency and its borough in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They were provided with homes as a result of a partnership between the Metropolitan Housing Trust and the London borough of Brent. The new estate cost £5·4 million to build.

The interesting thing about the estate was that it provided a mixture between people who were coming together for the first time to buy their property in a shared home ownership scheme, and people who were renting the property. Thus there was that mix, which is so important, between people who had an equity stake in the buildings and people who, because it suited them, were renting property. The estate also had a variety of accommodation. It catered for the small family, for the larger family requiring four bedrooms and for the unit of a young married couple who required only one bedroom.

A range of housing would eliminate the development of a ghetto or siege mentality which affects many of the sprawling municipal monstrosities. They are monstrosities, and no one pretends otherwise or seeks to defend the indefensible which exists in some parts of the inner cities.

Is anyone seriously suggesting that housing action trusts hold the answer to that? Can anyone honestly say that housing action trusts consisting of appointees, presumably of the great and the good, without any roots in the local community, in no way democratically accountable and in which tenants will play no role at all, can rejuvenate the inner cities? If so, how, and on what experience will they draw? Where will the resources come from?

We suspect that the resources would come from resources that would otherwise be allocated to tackling the problem of some of the worst estates, which never in a million years would become the subject of housing action trusts or would be able to attract private investment on the market.

Is it seriously suggested that the City of London, which can hardly raise sufficient capital to invest in British industry, will suddenly be drawn into my constituency to rejuvenate Stonebridge and Church End? Of course that will not happen. Those communities will be allowed to stew in their own juice, while such resources as are available will go to housing action trusts. Those communities will become even more alienated and embittered than they are.

Stonebridge has an active forum in which local tenants and the estate management seek to come together to address their problems. They came together last year to address the problem of security in Hiscock house, a block

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of flats that had a serious fire which has been of considerable concern to local people on and off the estate. A bid was put in to the Department of the Environment to get porters in Hiscock house to do something about the vandalism and despair about which the Secretary of State for the Environment told us he was concerned in his opening remarks today. We are still waiting. We have had one rejection and we are waiting to see whether we get another.

I hope that the Minister in his summing-up, or later by letter, will have some good news for me and my constituents, because we need that money desperately to encourage tenants to take responsibility and to give them hope that they have a future bounded by safety and security rather than by crime and the fear of crime and the hopelessness and despair that come from an environment scarred by vandalism. I do not believe that housing action trusts offer anything to people trapped in those positions. If anything, they will make the situation infinitely worse.

Where do we go in the future? To what are we to look for some sort of vision about housing and the meeting of housing needs? Certainly not to the Government. I have sat through the debate and heard every speaker, but I have heard not one bleep from Government Members about what they want for housing or the quality of life of people who live on estates, whether private or public. We have heard nothing about the issues that are absolutely vital when seeking to provide a decent housing environment. We have heard nothing about light, space, gardens, safety and security or about giving people an environment in which their characters can grow and develop and something good can come out of their lives. We have heard nothing about that from Conservative Members.

Mr. Winnick: We are not likely to, either.

Mr. Boateng: There is a dearth of information about that. That is not good enough because people are entitled to better. It has been said that the Bill is irrelevant. In one sense I wish that it were, because the great sadness about the Bill is that, while it will certainly do no good, it has the capacity to do infinite harm. It will be opposed root and branch by the Opposition. Every dot and every comma will be argued and it will be fought at every step in Committee. Our people must be served and the Opposition are going to see that they are.

10.20 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): I am pleased to contribute to the debate. It saddens me to see the negative attitude of many Opposition Members to the housing issue and to the important parts of the Bill. To the Opposition those parts seem totally irrelevant, but they are important for the nation's good.

I was worried by the speech by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and by his attitude towards building societies. The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that building societies were formed in communities by local people who realised that they would be able to attend to future housing needs and to housing finance better than any other group of people or any subsequent authority that might receive powers from central Government to look into housing. It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman spoke in the way that he did.

I have great faith in building societies, and I hope that some of the exciting developments in which they are involved can be further developed. That can be done by people who really know what they are doing.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about muddle and malice. Surely the muddle and malice is all on the Opposition side. Opposition Members will talk about anything to do with housing as long as their remarks are negative towards a positive Bill such as this one. They have malice and over the years they have shown that malice towards those who are enterprising and who want to provide housing to meet the needs of the people. That malice has been prolonged, noisy and utterly unreasonable. It has cost the nation dear in terms of its housing stock and in terms of the freedoms that people are entitled to expect and to have.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about our lack of discussion about gardens, plants and paths. Does he not realise that without freedom to choose, those things are as nothing and that it is only through the policies that we pursue and offer to the nation that those freedoms are available? They are freedoms that are prized by our people, and they have chosen them in their decisions at the ballot box on three occasions in recent years.

It has always been a Conservative principle that the ownership of property offers a way forward for citizens to be free and independent. Since 1979 we have offered our citizens that possibility. We have moved away from state ownership which in itself is difficult to defend. The reluctance of Labour authorities to co-operate in the sale of council houses over the past few years is another example of the arrogance of power. That power is delegated by central Government to local government, and local government is not entitled to it as of right for evermore.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I take it that the hon. Gentleman agrees with the sale of council houses. Would he agree with an amendment to the Bill providing that local authority houses that go to private landlords will continue to carry the right to buy, and at the same discount as at present?

Mr. Kirkhope: That is a matter for the Secretary of State. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends appear to be exceptionally naive in assuming that there should be a direct comparison between properties freed under the Bill and council-owned properties that tenants have been given the right to buy. They fail to understand that one of the major arguments in favour of the right to buy is that it gives back to the tenants freedom of movement and the freedom to choose what they do with their property. It enables them to relate to others in a free market. We wish that to be extended to the rented sector, and that is in addition to the public housing that has been returned to tenants by way of sale.

In any event, the reluctance of local authorities to co-operate with Government policy on the sale of council houses has been overwhelmed by the people themselves, and Opposition Members have come to realise that. The softening of the Opposition's approach to the sale of council houses is a clear indication of that and of their reaction to the people and what they really believe.

The Government have achieved a movement towards the building of new houses in the private sector. That is very important because it has led to the regeneration of the building industry. Builders are pleased by the reaction of those who are now able to choose what sort of property they buy, where to buy it and how to deal with it afterwards.

Change is desperately needed in the private rented sector, and that is why I welcome the Bill. Opposition Members who feel that we are doing something new, radical and dangerous, do not realise — perhaps they simply do not wish to remember—that at one time the majority of private residences were rented. That was before the plethora of controls governing rents and the determining of tenures under leases. There is little evidence that at that time the contract entered into between landlord and tenant was the basis for exploitation of either by the other.

Of course, at the end of the last war, some Government action was needed to assist with the nation's pressing housing needs. The hon. Member for Brent, South referred to action taken by the Labour Government after 1945. I suggest to him that it was not until the 1950s, under Conservative Administrations, that we managed to break through and provide the housing that the country needed. The Socialism that appeared in the years after the war did nothing to help our needs. It imposed only greater restrictions to deter people from providing the housing resources that the country needed. When the Socialists were in power, it became open season for Government and their newly and sadly politicised colleagues in the town halls——

Mr. Battle: I put it to the hon. Gentleman that conditions in Chapeltown in his constituency have arisen because that area has the largest concentration of private landlords in the city of Leeds. Has he not one kind word to say for the local authority's housing action area, which has started to improve conditions in Chapeltown?

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising this matter, which I was going to deal with a little later. We wish, by passing the Bill, to address one of the reasons for the bad housing in Chapeltown. We wish to enable landlords in all areas to improve their properties because it is worth while to do so. In some cases, conditions have become extremely serious. Decay has set in well in some areas of our cities. That has been going on for 20 or 30 years. It is a direct result of long-term Socialist attacks on landlords and of long-term Socialist refusal to assist or co-operate in the renovation and improvement of properties

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because of their restrictions on landlords being able to modernise and improve properties, enjoy some benefit from them and make them worth while as an investment.

As I was saying, the Labour Administrations during the 1960s onwards made it open season for landlords and they became the bad men of the landlord and tenant world. Restrictions on letting and an appalling national economic structure destroyed the private rented sector, or what was left of it, and gave rise, in some instances, to certain behaviour by frustrated property owners. I am not excusing the appalling behaviour of certain landlords because it is not in any way defensible. Nevertheless, it is understandable that under the enormous pressures of artificiality created by Socialist Administrations there were bound to be attempts to avoid the law from time to time.

As someone who has lived in the north all my life I find it a disgraceful tragedy that so many fine old terraced houses and so many fine blocks of flats and properties in the north have been allowed to fall into such gross disrepair and decay, and with them whole districts of our cities, as a direct result of a destruction in the market of rented property.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred to Leeds and other cities. As I tried to say before, it is important to recognise the need in those cities for finance to be brought in far more than has been the case up to now in order to renovate and improve property and, what is more, to give some hope to property owners that their properties will be useful in the future, that they will have a proper return from them and that it will be worth while to do things to them, thereby giving tenants, as the hon. Member for Brent, South said, a better quality of life as a result—*[Interruption.]*

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My hon. Friend should notice that our colleague the hon. Member for Leeds, West and other Labour Members keep shouting, "Improvement grants." Will my hon. Friend remind them that under this Government there has been the most massive expansion of improvement grants that there has ever been? There has been up to £900 million for the improvement grants system. Will he remind our colleagues from Leeds that it is under the Leeds Labour party, as well as any other, that the run down of the inner city occurred? Will he remind them that projects such as the technical and vocational education initiative, which would improve the skill and opportunity of people in those areas, were totally ignored by the Leeds Labour party?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech, not an intervention.

Mr. Kirkhope: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), for that important intervention. I agree with everything that he said. There is no doubt that Government policy has been enlightened. Finances that have been reasonably available without damaging the economy have been made available for home improvement grants. As a result of that, perhaps some of the worst defects have been avoided. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Leeds, West should recognise that local government cannot avoid criticism. The hon. Gentleman should not assume that local government can get away scot free. Local government's hypocritical and appalling record in local housing must be answered during the Bill's passage.

Many local authorities have been allowed to build up massive rent arrears, not because of tenants' poverty but because of weak or, even worse, uncommitted management which failed to ensure that the money was made up. Let us consider the resources that have been wasted because of the failure to put out repair and maintenance to private tender. One need only look at local authorities, such as in Leeds, to see that that is exactly what has happened.

What about housing development in the 1960s? Many decisions were made nationally — as we admit — and locally, but local authorities must take full blame for the present position. The number of demolitions of blocks of flats and streets of houses that were built then is sad, and shows that the planning at local level left much to be desired. I hope that in future local authorities will not have the powers that they had then and will not make the desperate mistakes that destroyed the quality of life of so many people. If the private rented sector had been encouraged and helped by those councils, the position would be much better.

The Bill is overdue and is very much welcomed. It recognises the changing position through our strong economic growth and the new needs of the people, many of whom are now more mobile and wish to live for a time, if not permanently, in rented accommodation. It gives the necessary encouragement for those who wish to provide housing for rent and allows a bargain to be struck between a landlord and a tenant with the minimum interference. It provides a basis for a strong, competitive and expanding private sector, which is what we require when renting properties. The Bill will allow standards to be improved and facilities to be uprated. It will improve the chances of older property being acquired and made useful once more. That, combined with the use of housing action trusts, which I welcome, will help to breathe new life into vast areas of our towns and cities.

Local authorities complain that the new legislation will increase waiting lists for rehousing for the homeless. I do not accept that—I believe the contrary to be true. It is important, however, for local government to realise that removing certain commercial parts of their work will at least allow them to attend to the needs of those for whom they act in a particular role. I remind them of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and of the roots of local authority, which were to help people rather than to control them and their lives. The growth throughout this century has been into matters that should properly be left to those who understand them. The days of the local authority as a business operator in many services should surely be numbered.

Housing can be an emotive subject, but I see no reason why it should be a prerogative of the Opposition to be emotive about something so important. As a believer in individual choice and power for people, I see the Housing Bill as a further essential step along the road to freedom.

10.45 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I shall not weary the House by repeating the arguments put so powerfully by my hon. Friends. However, a number of points affect my constituency and my country. This Bill, like so many before the House, has nothing to do with Wales. During

the opening speeches of this debate and during Second Reading debates on other Bills, it was evident that the Government were dealing with the problems of London, and sometimes of only one or two London boroughs. In Wales, the Bill will be viewed as an alien, irrelevant imposition.

To malice and muddle on the Conservative Benches we could add another "m"—mythology. The Government are victims of their own propaganda and mythology. When it was said that the Labour party has been in favour of selling council houses, there was a universal bray of disbelief from Tory Members. How do they explain that the constituency with the largest Labour majority also has the largest number of owner-occupied houses? I refer to the Rhondda Valley. That authority has been Labour-controlled for almost all of the past 50 years and has been selling council houses for almost every one of the past 20 years. It has a record of splendid creativity in housing.

The Labour party is biased against private landlordism because of a bitter memory that goes back through generations over the centuries. There was once a bipartisan approach to housing—an agreement that there should be an alternative to the private landlord. Every fair-minded person who has worked in local authorities throughout the years accepts that there have been excesses in municipal landlordism that have to be corrected. One method of doing so is to create mixed communities.

There are some awful features to the Bill. An entirely new concept of democracy is creeping across Conservative Benches. In the Education Reform Bill, democracy means a 20 per cent. majority. Under this Bill, 51 per cent. must vote against a proposal. In theory, no one could wish to vote in favour, yet the proposal will go through. That sort of democracy can be understood only by the Tontons Macoutes. Such democracy is meaningless and the Bill must be amended in Committee and on Report.

The assured tenancy provision will, in fact, reduce security of tenure. The Bill confines succession to a spouse, yet in many families the remaining single person now has a right of succession. The rent review assessments are very much in the landlord's favour. The panels will not be allowed to take tenant improvements or length of residence into account. The criterion for rents is to be what might reasonably be expected on the open market. In an area of high demand, poor tenants will have to move to cheaper accommodation. That is thoroughly unjust.

The Bill will create two classes of tenants — those lucky enough to have a secure tenancy with a local authority and those on an assured tenancy with a new landlord, where there will be no right to a secure tenancy at an affordable rent. The power of local authorities is being oppressed. People in local government have a vote too, and they were elected democratically. It should be remembered that only eight Tory Members of Parliament were returned from the 38 Welsh constituencies. Yet the Government constantly seek to stretch their tentacles of undemocratic power into areas that are none of their business.

I accept that we need an engine of imaginative power in parts of local authorities to do something about the problems on estates, many of which have grown out of the sheer size of an estate and the one-tenure system. However, we do not need a body such as the housing action trust that is envisaged in the Bill. It will be unrepresentative of local people. There have been many such bodies in Wales recently. In an area known as the Abergavenny triangle, it is said about the nominated bodies that they bring to rural Gwent the Welsh accent that is spoken at Eton and Harrow, not the one spoken in Grangetown or Llanfairpwllgwyngyll.

There is a move to pack these bodies with unrepresentative Government placemen. We can see very little to be enthusiastic about in a housing action trust to which not only will the housing powers be transferred from local authorities but the planning and environmental health powers as well. This is a new body that will extend the mandate of the Government into Wales; the enemy within will have even greater power there.

I read today in the main newspaper in Wales that the new Secretary of State is to produce a master plan in the new year, after his brief visit to a few of the valleys. In those valleys, in Cynon Valley and Merthyr, housing problems, as local Members have said, are not just in parts the worst in Britain, but the worst in Europe. How on earth can there be a master plan when this whole Bill is off target and is irrelevant to Wales?

The Newport authority, part of whose area I represent, has an extraordinary record in housing innovation. I wish hon. Members would look at this instead of sticking to their doctrinaire, narrow view of the whole mass of Labour authorities throughout the country. The local authority has modernised all the pre-war stock. Energy conservation measures have been installed in nearly all the houses. Virtually all the pre-war and post-war houses have central heating. There have been innovative schemes of repair, shared ownership, stay-put schemes for the elderly, schemes for mobile homes, and other schemes which have been of great value.

Where we now need a period of stability and imaginative rebuilding in housing, we see instead something which is based on malice and a doctrinaire view.

I would like to refer to a statement made earlier, in which a fellow Member for Gwent, one of the greatest Members that this House has seen, was quoted by hon. Members on the Government Benches. His words were caricatured and misused. What Aneurin Bevan said when he was made Minister of Housing was that what he wanted to create above all else in the housing programme was that lovely feature of all Welsh and English village life, where the carpenter, the teacher, the blacksmith and the solicitor live side by side in one street, what he called the rich tapestry of a mixed community.

That was a high ambition, but what do we see in Britain today, after 10 years of Thatcherism? Do we see a beautiful picture, a rich tapestry, a balanced community? No, we see a jigsaw, a society whose housing is divided by sharp lines, divisions of poverty and of privilege. On one piece of the jigsaw we see privileged estates hiding behind barbed wire, with guards in front of them to keep out the rest of the population and to guard against crime; on another piece of the jigsaw are the shunned estates, places where crime and fear have built up. That is the jigsaw society of housing that has been created by this Government. The Bill will drive a wedge deeper into those divisions.

10.48 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I would like to join other hon. Members in congratulating my three hon. Friends who have made their maiden speeches tonight on this important Bill. I certainly welcome the Bill in its attempt to open up the private sector for renting. I have listened very carefully to what hon. Opposition Members have said

[Mr. David Amess]

about local council provision in their own areas. I have to say that my own experience, certainly in the London borough of Newham, is quite different.

I was born in Newham and lived there for the first 29 years of my life. If anyone wants to see how a local authority can mismanage local council housing provision, he should go to the London borough of Newham. There is no doubt that the council has destroyed very happy east end communities.

I wish, however, to address my brief remarks to part IV, which deals with the change of landlords and secure tenants. I am proud to represent the town of Basildon, the largest and finest new town in the country, where 16,000 properties are rented from the new town commission and 6,000 are rented from the council.

A few years ago, negotiations began between the Department of the Environment and the local authority about the local authority taking over the 16,000 properties. I am glad to have the opportunity today to draw attention to the disgraceful political posturing that has taken place in the past 18 months in relation to those negotiations.

There is no doubt that the former Socialist council in Basildon wasted a great deal of ratepayers' money on political propaganda expressly to damage the chances of Conservative candidates in local elections last year and this year and to damage my candidacy in the general election. I well recall taking a delegation to meet Lord Skelmersdale earlier this year when he was shown something that I can only describe as a video nasty, the star of which was a leading personality from EastEnders. I am not sure that the television personality concerned even knew where Basildon was, but the local authority paid him a large fee to appear in that video nasty. The video showed an elderly person trying to carry a giant letter along the street, supposedly representing the increased bills that tenants might have to pay if housing associations or other bodies rather than the local authority took over responsibility for their housing. It also showed disgraceful scenes of tenants being kicked out of their homes and thrown on to the doorsteps.

Leaflets were also put through people's doors, printed and published at ratepayers' expense and at the instigation of the then Socialist local council. The object, of course, had nothing to do with caring about people's housing needs and everything to do with trying to damage Conservative candidates' chances in the local elections and my chances in the general election. I am happy to say that those calculations went wrong and we doubled our majority in the constituency of Basildon.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for new towns has told us on a number of occasions to reassure tenants that when responses from local associations and others who might be interested in taking over some of the 16,000 properties are received there will be some kind of referendum or full consultation with tenants.

I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that, just as Labour Members have done a U-turn in their views on the right to buy, they will do the same on the right to rent.

10.53 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I have been asked to be extremely brief, so I hope that a certain incoherence will be forgiven, Madam Deputy Speaker. Nevertheless, I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the 35,000 people on the housing waiting list in Manchester and the hundreds of homeless people there, none of whom sees any relevance in the Bill and all of whom will oppose it as strongly as I do.

In the short time in which I have been a Member of Parliament I have noticed a consistent strand in the Government's legislative proposals. I have been reminded today of the proposals in the White Paper on primary health care. The consistency is that in primary health care, if one charges enough for a prescription and for visits to the optician or the dentist, one prevents people having that health care. The same applies to housing. If one charges enough for housing, one stops the people in greatest need having access to housing. That is what the legislation is about.

The Bill will increase the number of homeless people in Manchester, push up rents, encourage despicable landlords, increase harassment and eviction, and reduce real choice in the housing market.

I shall refer briefly to three areas of the legislation: part I on the private rented sector, part IV on the so-called tenant choice and part III on the housing action trusts. Part I, relating to the private rented sector, will reduce the tenure that is available to tenants and, at the same time, reduce the amount of housing benefit that is available. Unlike the fairy-tale scenarios that have been painted by Conservative Members during the debate, I want to show what I believe the results will be in Manchester if the legislation becomes the law. First, the market in Manchester will push up rents rapidly. They will increase without the complementary increase in housing benefit that would allow those on low incomes or who are wholly dependent on housing benefit to afford any accommodation.

Secondly, security of tenure will be substantially reduced and will be non-existent for those tenants with resident landlords. Notice to quit will depend on the grounds that the landlord intends to use for claiming possession, irrespective of the validity of that claim. Especially worrying is that in many cases of rent arrears, a court will be obliged to order possession against the tenant even if, for example, the arrears arise because of the payment periods of housing benefit and not because of any fault of the tenant.

Thirdly, it is presumably intended that the level of market rents will fall as the market is glutted with private rented accommodation. However, there must be great doubt as to whether there will be such enthusiasm on the part of potential investors to enter such a volatile market. Those new landlords who do so are likely to be seeking a quick return on the capital invested. They are likely to be tempted into purchasing partly or fully-tenanted properties and illegally to evict tenants to take advantage of the fresh legislation. Although the amendments to the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 are to be welcomed, they are not especially strong and are unlikely to deter determined landlords from making a fast buck from this legislation. We have already heard today that

Rachmanism will return, and I believe that that is exactly what will happen in the private rented sector in Manchester.

The next part of the scenario is that homelessness in that sector will inevitably arise from harassment and illegal eviction, from inability to pay the high rents and from the inaccessability of the sector due to the changes in DHSS regulations from April 1988 that we have heard about. We have heard the Minister say on television, on "This Week, Next Week", that he is relying on housing subsidy to pay for the increased rents. However, when I asked him during the debate on housing benefit whether that would be the case, he refused to answer. Indeed, he could not answer because we have already seen the cuts that he has made in housing benefit. He admitted the latest round of £640 million. They will not apply to this sector because under the new changes there will not be any provision for rent in advance or for deposits. Low income people will not be able to afford to enter the sector because of those changes in the DHSS regulations.

I am especially worried by ground 1 in schedule 2:

"Suitable alternative accommodation is available".

That means that when a landlord takes over accommodation he can look for suitable alternative accommodation and evict someone. Can the Minister give an absolute assurance tonight that elderly people living in under-occupied rented accommodation will not be evicted if the landlord claims that there is suitable alternative accommodation?

Is there real choice in the legislation where it speaks of tenant choice or picking a landlord? Or, is it the landlord who will pick a property? Since the Government are so convinced that public sector tenants will fare better under alternative landlords, can the Minister assure us that those tenants will be given the choice to opt back into public sector housing?

On housing action trusts, why is there no statutory obligation, such as that on local authorities, on alternative landlords, particularly regarding homelessness? Why will they not have to house vulnerable elderly people, those fearful of domestic violence, young people who might be subjected to sexual or financial exploitation, families with young children, and people who are vulnerable because of mental or physical handicaps or disability? Why will alternative landlords not have the same statutory duty to house those people as do local authorities?

11 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I welcome this important and necessary measure. It is set against a background of the massive social change of the past decade and an enormous growth in the number of households of single persons. That is putting new strains on our present housing system and a revision of the underlying laws is required. Time does not allow anyone who speaks at this stage to go into all the Bill's ramifications, so I shall concentrate on housing associations in London and on empty properties.

I welcome the greater status which the Bill gives to housing associations, and I believe that, broadly speaking, it has cross-party support, although at times one would not have thought so tonight. However, I am worried that, as all London Members will know, in London there are enormous problems and anxieties whether the housing association movement will continue to be able to look after those less fortunate—its traditional role—if there is insufficient housing association grant. The Minister knows my fears because we have discussed this on more than one occasion. I hope and trust that the Government are taking on board the need to give a grant higher than 50 per cent. in London, if housing associations are to continue to do that. I am pleased to see him nodding his head.

The main employers in London, almost to a man, woman and authority, confirm the difficulty in recruiting and holding staff. It would be worrying if, as a result of this legislation—I hope to serve in Committee—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I have a supporters' club. It would be worrying if the Bill were to remove the present provision of housing for essential workers in central London.

Empty property and homelessness are not given a high profile in the Bill. In Committee I hope that we can discuss the use of empty properties, not because that is uniquely the answer to homelessness—obviously it is not—but because it is one of many possible ways of tackling homelessness. We need to find more effective ways of using empty properties and not only those in the public sector.

I confess that I have some sympathy with the Bill announced recently by Lord Scarman. It will require local authorities who were keeping properties empty for more than six months to make them available to co-operatives, housing associations and groups, unless there is a good reason for them to remain empty.

We must also discuss private properties and recognise the distinction between ownership and use of those properties. Ownership is critical, and we should do anything that tackles that matter. I recognise that, in parts of central London, there are rows and rows of empty properties, and that cannot be justified. Such properties are often deteriorating. It should be possible for a local authority, particularly a local authority charged with a providing role—increasingly the Government see local authorities with such a role—to make use of such properties and to return them to the owner after a fixed time in an equivalent or even better state. If we are serious about tackling homelessness, we must consider this important matter.

With those brief comments, I give the Bill my blessing and look forward to taking part in the Committee considering it.

11.5 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Bill has been sometimes described by Conservative Members as the "pick a landlord" Bill. However, we are all aware that people are worried that it will turn into the "Revive Rachman" Bill. Conservative Members have a deep-seated prejudice against local authorities having the freedom to build; to use the receipts from the sale of council houses to build further housing; and to set a budget that is appropriate to gearing and appropriate to the assets held by such authorities in respect of housing.

The important thing that local authorities want to do is to provide housing for the people on their waiting lists. If Conservative Members were honest, they would agree that most of the surgery cases that they see on a Friday or a Saturday ask such questions as, "Can we get a local authority house?", "Can we get repairs done to the local authority house that we have?", "Will the repairs be done by well-qualified workmen and not by cowboys?", "What about our improvement grant that has been in the pipeline, but has been blocked?" Such grants can be in the pipeline for anything up to nine years. We also face the problems

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

of homelessness and people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The Bill does practically nothing for people in such categories, and is a monumental irrelevance in areas such as Wales where so much of the housing dates from the 1870s to 1914. In Wales there is an urgent need for the greater provision of improvement grants to bring houses up to date. That is more important than what the ministerial team have put in this irrelevance of a Bill.

Let us consider the problem that is created by local authorities' inability to build. Conservative Members often quote the fact that they think that they invented the right to buy council housing. What do they see is the great virtue of the right to buy council housing? Is it the act of acquiring one's own home and therefore the ability to put one's efforts and skills into repairing and improving that house? Is it the achievement of the euthanasia of the local authority landlord? We hope that they consider that the great virtue is acquiring one's own home and that Conservative Members are not activated by some deep-seated, dogmatic hostility to local authorities and their housing role.

If Conservative Members wish to encourage the ownership of property, logically, it must be right to encourage local authorities to continue to build. If it is right for local authority tenants to be able to buy their own homes it must also be right to allow local authorities to continue to build local authority housing so that the tenants of the next 10 years have the same right to buy as those tenants of the past 10 or 20 years. One cannot buy a house if it has not been built.

The Bill will make it economically impossible for local authorities to continue to build. That means that local authorities have no elbow room in which to carry out their statutory duty to inspect houses in multiple occupation. Landlords who allow their houses to run down, such as in my constituency and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), are virtually inviting the local authority to close down such flats so that the local authority can serve notice for a mandatory grant under the Housing Act 1985. However, for the local authority to do so it must have alternative accommodation in which to house the tenants from such multiple occupation houses. At the moment the authorities do not have such alternative accommodation and they simply cannot carry out their statutory duty. Will the Bill help people in those conditions? Certainly not. I hope that that will be put right before the Bill becomes law.

11.9 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I must declare an interest. I work for a company involved in the private rented sector. Were it not for the existing restrictions on that sector, the company would be much more involved than it is.

Before the introduction of shorthold tenancies and assured tenancies in recent years, many private landlords had given up and were selling their properties as they became vacant. Those two measures have transformed the position. The proposals in the Bill will go further to revitalise and rejuvenate the sector, but it would happen much more quickly if more attention was paid to another key area — tax incentives to private landlords. It is a matter of great regret that the capital allowances introduced in the Finance Act 1982, in response to the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Environment in 1981-82, were phased out from 1984 to 1986.

It is encouraging that the Local Government Bill includes proposals for councils to pay 30 per cent. grants to the private sector, including housing associations. However, besides the return to capital allowances, I want to see tax relief on rental payments. That has encouraged and stimulated private investment in rented housing in other countries, and until some tax relief is available for the private rented sector here, it will always be the poor relation of owner-occupation. If the Minister introduced some tax relief, he would be rewarded by a private rented sector expanding at a rate that he could not have believed.

11.11 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I congratulate the hon. Members for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Gloucester (Mr. French) on their interesting, well-constructed maiden speeches. I disagreed with them, although of course I could not intervene, but I hope that we shall hear equally interesting and well-constructed speeches from them in the future.

I hope that the Minister who replies to the debate will say on what the £25 million extra for the homeless can be spent. May the local authorities use it to provide hostels or permanent accommodation, or is it just extra money to pay the ever-increasing bed-and-breakfast bills that are being run up by local authorities as a consequence of increasing homelessness?

We, and some Conservative Members, want to know whether the Government intend to abolish the housing cost floor. The Conservative Association of District Councils opposes that, as does all local government. If it was abolished, more council houses might be sold, but for less than it costs the local authorities to build them. A council could build a new council house and the day after it had been let, the tenant—who had lived in another council house and therefore qualified—could buy it for about half or even one third of the cost of building it. That would be completely wrong.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill which will follow this one will be aimed at subsidising people, not bricks and mortar. I and my hon. Friends oppose that principle completely. If we subsidise people, as we do in the owner-occupied sector, the amount of money coming from the Exchequer could increase dramatically, without an extra house being built or modernised. The best housing subsidies are those which initiate the building of new houses and the improvement of older houses, as the subsidy system before the Housing Act 1980 used to do. In that case, a local authority received about 60 per cent. of the moneys needed to build new houses and modernise older ones.

Some hon. Members mentioned mobility in the owner-occupied sector and not in the public sector. People can choose to buy a house, then sell it and move somewhere else. That is one-way mobility. Someone can sell a house in the south or in London and move north, where there are no jobs. But one cannot sell a house on Merseyside, or in the north of England, and move down south to look for a job, because one cannot afford to buy another one. So the one-way mobility that existed to some extent before has been destroyed by the Government allowing massive inequalities to develop. House prices have escalated

beyond the reach of ordinary people in London, the south and other areas, while they have fallen in places such as Merseyside.

Listening to some of the speeches by Conservative hon. Members tonight, one would think that the Bill was being introduced by a Government who had just come to power for the first time, after having been out of office for eight years. It is as though it is all happening in a vacuum. The Bill must be set in the context of the Government's record over the last eight years—a record of which they should be ashamed. Public and private house building has slumped—from more than 322,000 new homes built in 1975 to 200,000 in 1986. Only 30,000 public sector homes were started in 1986, compared with 150,000 in 1975. Yet Conservative Members claim that they want to increase the supply of rented accommodation.

One third of our homes were built before 1919, and more than a million of them are unfit after nine years of Conservative Government. One in four homes is unfit, lacks basic amenities or is in substantial disrepair. The Government's own survey shows that £19 billion is urgently needed for repairs to council homes, but the Government have denied local councils the resources to take the necessary action.

The worst scandal — and Conservative Members know it—is that, having advocated the sale of council assets so that the money was available to build more homes, the Government now prevent councils from using those assets and capital receipts. By their housing policy, the Government have contributed to a divided Britain. Home ownership has been encouraged, and we welcome that — but even for those who can barely afford it, which has led to terrible difficulties. There has been no help for people in such difficulties.

Under this Government, interest rates have been, on average, 50 per cent. higher than under previous Labour Governments, and the number of people with mortgage arrears jumped from 8,500 in 1979 to more than 70,000 in 1986. The Government have the audacity to talk about rent arrears when they have inflicted those sorts of circumstances on owner-occupiers and caused arrears in mortgage repayments on the scale that I have described. Low-income council tenants have faced steeply increasing rents and reductions in housing benefits under the Government.

Of course, the legislation says nothing about homelessness and how to deal with it, except that the housing action trusts that take over properties from local authorities will have no responsibility, having taken them over; nor will the private landlords or organisations to which they hand them on have responsibility for accepting homeless families, or nominations for people in housing need from the local authority. That is the only reference to homelessness in the legislation — to make it more difficult for local authorities that are left with responsibilities for the homeless under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977—to deal with them.

Homelessness reached record heights last year, with 103,000 households — the equivalent of 250,000 men, women and children — accepted as homeless by local authorities in England alone. That compared with 53,000 in 1978. In June 1987, there were 23,000 households in temporary accommodation — double the figure in June 1984. The number living in bed-and-breakfast hostels in June was 11,000 — 4,000 more than 12 months before, under a Conservative Government. Homeless families, particularly from ethnic minorities, tend to end up in bed and breakfast; and the massive increase in council waiting lists that has taken place under the Government is the measure of the hidden homelessness in this country.

There has been a massive increase in council waiting lists; in England, in April 1986, 1·35 million were on the lists — an increase of 200,000 compared to 18 months before.

That is the background. That is the housing crisis that the nation faces, which the Bill does not address in any way. We have the Housing Act 1980. I served on the Committee, which started in 1979, immediately after the Conservatives won the general election. We heard all the arguments and the scenario. They said on Second Reading and in Committee that what we had to do to solve the housing shortage was to revitalise the private rented sector. They said that but for those wicked Rent Acts that Labour Governments had put on the statute book, limiting the rents that could be charged to tenants by landlords, and but for the security of tenure that meant that landlords could not get rid of tenants easily, there would be no shortage of housing. All the empty houses in private ownership would come on the market. People would invest their capital because they could get a fair return, and the private sector would provide the houses that were needed. So the Government said that they had solved the problem in 1980. They decontrolled 200,000 tenancies and introduced the concept of assured tenancies. They allowed fair rents to be increased every two years, and to be increased higher than previously.

The Government's pièce de résistance was the shorthold tenancy agreement, which meant that when people became private tenants they could have security of tenure only for the length of time that the shorthold tenancy agreement lasted—one, two, three or four years. At the end of that period, the landlord could give 14 days' notice and evict the tenant. Thus, the security of tenure problem was overcome.

If the tenant wanted to renew the shorthold tenancy, he had better be a good tenant. That meant not trying to get one's rent fixed or trying to get a fair rent assessed. He did not go to the rent officer, or else at the end of the shorthold period, out he went and in came someone who could pay a higher rent. A coach and horses was driven through security of tenure by the 1980 Act. There has been no security of tenure for the past six or seven years, but what has happened? Where are all the properties? Why have they not come flooding on to the market? Why is homelessness increasing? Why is there still a crisis? I shall tell the House why. The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) gave the game away. In fact, the Tory Association of District Councils puts its finger on it. It doubts whether the market rents now proposed by the Government are a better way of seeking to revise the private rented sector, as in many cases it must mean rents at the level of mortgage payments without the benefits of tax relief.

One cannot subsidise the public rented sector and housing associations or the owner-occupied sector and then allow landlords in the private rented sector to charge what they want, and not have the private rented sector doing anything but offer a dearer alternative. If access can be gained to a subsidised sector, whether owner-occupied or public rented, no one in his right mind will take the dearer alternative.

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

One can revitalise the private rented sector only if one does one of two things—stop subsidising all the other sectors, including the owner-occupied sector, or start subsidising the private landlord. Even this Secretary of State for the Environment is not Right-wing enough to do that. It would be an outrage if the Tories went mad giving money to private landlords to make a profit out of housing. If he wants to suggest that, let him do so, and we shall fight him.

I shall say this for the Government. In an attempt to revitalise the private rented sector, they have attacked the subsidy systems to the public rented sector. They are doing it again in the legislation. There are no longer any Government subsidies to talk of to local authority housing revenue accounts, because rents have already been forced up to levels where most local authorities make profits on those accounts. In this legislation, the Government will outlaw rate fund contributions to those accounts to put the final seal making the rents for those in the public sector, whether council or housing association property, as high as the private landlord will be allowed to charge.

People must be denied access to the public rented sector or the public rented sector must be made as expensive as the private rented sector if the Government are to stand any hope in their aims to revitalise the private rented sector. It is all part of the strategy to prevent people from getting access to the public rented sector — housing associations and council housing — for people to be dependent upon the private sector. That is why no more council houses are being built. Since 1979, the axe has been wielded; there is no more money for the housing associations or for general purposes.

The so-called respectable arm of the public housing sector—many associations run by people who would be happy on a Conservative constituency association—were amazed when the Conservative Government cut their funding and stopped them building houses for general use as well. If the Government are to stop funding housing association and council housing, they will have to stop the lot, because that will make people dependent upon the private landlords, and it is all part of a total strategy. That did not work, so the Government are going further and producing an extreme Bill.

We opposed the sale of council houses 10 years ago. Let me say what I mean by that: our policies at the 1983 and 1979 elections were exactly the same policies as those of the alliance. The Labour party did not oppose the sale of council houses; we opposed the compulsion on local authorities to sell houses when they did not want to. The right-to-buy policy consisted of central Government telling local authorities which had been opposed to the sale of council houses that they had to sell them. We never opposed the selling of council houses in principle; we have opposed compulsory selling. The Bootle Labour council pioneered the sale of council houses, as did many other Labour local authorities.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My constituents will find this difficult to understand, because they remember that the Labour-controlled Norwich city council put every obstacle in the way of the purchase of council houses.

Mr. Roberts: The Norwich Labour council was elected on the policy of opposing the sale of council houses.

The Labour party opposed central Government dictating to local authorities. We have a strong tradition of opposing the Government dictating to local authorities. We said 10 years ago that, if local councils were forced to sell council houses, the best would be sold and local authorities would be left with the worst.

If council housing is so bad, such a terrible failure, I do not know why the Government think everyone has been buying it. Approximately 20 to 30 per cent. of the best council houses have been bought by people as sitting tenants because they are desirable accommodation built by Labour and Conservative councils. If council housing is so bad, why are the Conservatives boasting that it is a good thing to buy council houses? Of course there are problem estates, and many of the worst have been left to local authorities.

The Government will not give the right to buy to sitting tenants—this is why the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is wrong—but will, in one way or another, through this Bill, sell off council housing over the heads of tenants, against the tenants' wishes. The Government will sell off houses, without the permission of the tenants, to housing action trusts and private landlords.

Mr. Gow: So that the House and his hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) can be clear about Opposition policy, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that it is now the policy of the Labour party not to repeal the right to buy?

Mr. Roberts: The answer to that is yes, and the hon. Gentleman knows that. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) expressed a personal view and did not state the policy of the Labour party. We are now addressing the wicked policy of the Government on housing action trusts. They talk about freedom. If there are elections, they will be rigged. An election system in which an estate of tenants will decide whether they will be handed over to a housing action trust is a system worthy of Stalin.

What is proposed is not the right to choose a new landlord. The tenants may have no say whatever in what happens, because under these proposals an organisation, a private landlord or a housing association approved by the Housing Corporation can say to a local authority that it wants to take over an estate and can put forward proposals. There must then be a vote by the tenants on that estate, and 51 per cent. of the tenants—not 51 per cent. of those who vote — have to vote against the proposal or it will go through. In other words, 40 per cent. of the tenants could vote against the proposal, no one could vote in favour of it and, under this legislation, the estate could still be handed over to the housing action trust and then on to a private landlord. That is not freedom of choice. It is enforcement and the strangest kind of freedom that I have ever heard about.

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) said that we would not do anything about the Rent Acts. We would do a lot about the Rent Acts. We would introduce a charter for private tenants. This legislation is a charter for the private landlord. If Conservative Members believe in freedom of choice and the right to buy, why do they not support Labour party policy and give the right to buy to private tenants? If you believe that people should have the right to opt out of being council tenants, why not give private tenants——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must recognise the Chair when he is speaking.

Mr. Roberts: Why do Conservative Members and the Government not give private tenants the right to opt out and to choose social ownership, to choose to become tenants of a council? If Conservatives believe in freedom, they should let it work both ways. That is what a Labour Government would do. We would close Rent Acts loopholes such as bogus holiday lets and the use of licences instead of tenancies. We would introduce regulations to stop exploitation of service charges and would repeal the shorthold tenancy proposals which have driven a coach and horses through security of tenure.

We would give a right in law to an effective and efficient repair service for private and public tenants. Neither private nor public tenants have that at the moment. We would introduce provisions for full information about the name of the landlord and about other matters, because many landlords will not tell tenants who their landlords are. Some tenants of 40 years standing cannot find out who their landlords are. Is that freedom? We would introduce stiffer penalties and more adequate safeguards against harassment and illegal eviction, and place on the private landlord a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of his tenants.

We do not accept that these higher rents, these assured tenancies, are assured. In reality, an assured tenancy is an insecure high-rent tenancy, an assured shorthold is an insecure short letting and a market rent is a high rent. It is not just a market rent, it is a profit rent that will penalise people in the public and private rented sector, and we are against it. We have policies for real choice and will introduce a private tenants' charter when we form a Government.

We will introduce what some Conservative Members were calling on the Government to introduce—mobile discounts for families with children who are stuck in flats and who need help with deposits so that they can buy houses and become owner-occupiers. Those people have suffered as a result of the Government's housing policies. We would launch a massive council and housing association low-rise building programme in order to do something about the shortage of rented accommodation. Aneurin Bevan said that the best form of rent control is when nine people are chasing 10 properties, and not the other way round.

I remember attending my first advice bureau as the newly-elected Member for Bootle. A woman came to me and said, "I've got a problem." I asked, "What's your problem?" She replied, "It's a housing problem." I said, "That's usual. It would be that. What's your housing problem?" She said, "It's about my roof." I replied, "What about your roof?" She said, "I want one." There are thousands, millions, who need homes, and the way to deal with the housing crisis is to build more homes. There must be more homes for rent in the public rented sector. There must be a major house building programme and the right sort of housing must be built. I accept that there are some problem estates and that mistakes have been made, but the majority of council housing is low-rise with gardens in an attractive environment in popular estates, where the right to buy has been popular for all those reasons.

I plead guilty to that which we, the Opposition, have been accused of by Conservative Members during the debate. We are against a free market in housing. We do not accept that housing should be left to the free market. We do not believe that a decent house—a decent home—is a privilege. It is a right, not a privilege, in the same way that a decent education and access to health care are rights. Housing should not be a matter for profit and speculators. We should not be handing over the inner cities to profiteers, private landlords and speculators.

The Opposition will repeal the proposed legislation, if it is enacted, when we next form a Government. We shall ensure that the market place does not determine whether someone gets a decent house. Criteria of need are as important as the ability to pay.

11.36 pm

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): I think that everyone has paid tribute to the shade of Aneurin Bevan today, and I pay tribute to the splendid quotation that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) tossed into the pudding. If rent control consists of more supply than demand, that is exactly what the Government would wish to endorse.

I may have lost count, but I believe that I am the 30th speaker in the debate. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will forgive me if I do not take up every argument that they have advanced. Apart from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, no Privy Councillors have contributed to the debate, and it seems that we have progressed quite a deal faster as a result.

We have heard three excellent maiden speeches, and everyone, including the hon. Member for Bootle, has paid tribute to those who delivered them. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) is a strong supporter of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), a near parliamentary neighbour, spoke of the pressure on housing in areas that are economically successful and the delay that is still to be found in implementing the right-to-buy policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) spoke also of that delay. We shall be introducing provisions in the Bill to meet the arguments that my hon. Friends have advanced. As the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has said, Labour-controlled councils have sold council houses over many years, and have done so efficiently. I wish that the leaders of the Labour groups that have done so would bite the leaders of others who seem not to listen so attentively.

It is ironic that the hon. Member for Bootle is claiming, rather like Russian scientists in the Stalinist era who claimed to have discovered everything, including gravity, to have discovered the policy that led to the sale of council houses. The Labour Government's circular 70/74 advised that it was "generally wrong" to sell council houses. However, the Labour Opposition have now endorsed the right to buy, so they are coming along.

There was little in what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said was wrong with the present system with which I and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends would disagree. The hon. Gentleman was eloquent and accurate when he spoke of his direct experience and described the failures of Governments both Labour and Conservative, and both central Government and local government, in design, architecture and planning during the 1950s, 1960s and on into the 1970s. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the houses that Liverpool city

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

council are building, or altering, on the Speke estate, for example, are fine. The design is far better than that of past housing.

I know that the hon. Member for Walton will not consider it anything other than a compliment if I describe him as an old-fashioned Socialist who believes that the problems must be solved by state provision above all, perhaps even state provision alone. The divide came between him and Conservative Members and, indeed, among some of his hon. Friends on how the new communities that we all want to build should be built. We say by partnership and plurality of provision, by owner-occupation as well as state provision. That is the sort of thing that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) described in the estate that he mentioned. That sort of estate carries through the principles of Estate Action — that used to be called UHRU in my Department — and the priority estates programme and so on. That seems to us to be the way forward. That point was also made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) in what I thought was an extremely positive speech. We need plurality of provision if we are to avoid the grand mistakes of the past. Those mistakes were made by some people saying "numbers at all costs" — the hon. Member for Brent, South made that point — and others saying that we should centralise according to a pattern.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has a long expert background in all these matters. He made an extremely constructive speech on the way in which one can solve some of the problems at community level. Even among some of the poor housing that we built in the 1960s, if the community strength is revived — he is an expert in doing that by the co-operative route, but there are other routes — some of that housing can be made tolerable. He has taken me to places in his constituency where that is being done. The hon. Member for Newport, West made the same point.

Mr. Heffer: I never once said that everything should be done by the state through a centralised method. I have always agreed that there should be co-operative housing. I have always supported private housing. I said, and I continue to say, that the real need now is to build council houses for people in need because of the terrible problems facing our people at the moment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is the last person I would wish to misquote. I was unintentionally and wrongly transferring to him the views of Liverpool council. Liverpool will not work with the co-operative movement or housing associations — *[Interruption.]* Attitudes may now be changing. So little of the well-designed provision is available because Liverpool has not spread the skills out by co-operating with many of the bodies that have offered to help.

We deal with the private rented sector in part I of the Bill, not because we are so naive as to think that it will solve all the problems but because we know that we need that weapon in our housing armoury in a way that most other European countries have. For example, France has such a weapon and I recently visited that country to look at some of its estates and how it is dealing with them. Some of the estates are just as bad as, if not, in some respects, worse than the estates that we built in the 1960s. France is bringing the private rented sector into partnership with the state to solve some of the problems.

The hon. Member for Bootle said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was not Right-wing enough to subsidise the private rented sector. That is wrong. My right hon. Friend is Right-wing enough to do that and he has provided powers for local authorities to do that. What is more, local authorities, including some Labour local authorities, are doing just that. Surely that is right.

A whole range of my hon. Friends said that they welcome the fact that we are trying to get provision back from the private rented sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said that we are not going far enough. I am sure that he will keep us on the straight and narrow. My hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) and many others welcome the fact that we are doing that. This country lacks the important weapon that can be provided for meeting housing need in the private rented sector.

The one thing that almost shocked me in the otherwise interesting speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was that he said, as did many others, that the Bill was going to bring back into existence Mr. Rachman, or his modern equivalent. Where have they been? I know that in his constituency there are people operating now who are just as bad as Mr. Rachman ever was. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire mentioned the name of one, who I believe operates there but certainly operates in Kensington and Chelsea not far away, and in Brighton and Hove, where I recently looked at some of his properties. How do we get rid of such people? The Labour party tried to make it as near impossible to rent at all as it could. That has not driven those wide boys out of business. Those characters will not be driven out of business like that. They will be driven out of business only when there is a range of alternative property available from better and serious landlords with investment. That gives people the choice, which means that they do not have to go to Mr. Hoogstraten.

Mr. Soley: The 1980 Act, which enabled these people to return to business, combined with the dramatic cut in housebuilding, reduced choice.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not at all. If the hon. Gentleman reads the article recently published in, I think, *The Observer* about the landlord about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire talked, he will find that that man was in action before 1980. These laws have not driven those people out of business. They will be driven out — reference has been made to them — by the serious investors who, recognising that at last the House says that there is a permanent place in our armoury for private investment in renting, will start to put big money in again. The first has come forward. Nationwide Anglia is not the only player in this field; the Halifax has already been putting money in.

I recommend that those who are looking into this subject should go to France. It is a natural part of the investment portfolio of, for example, the insurance companies there to put money into private rented housing. That is at the long end of their portfolio. Because they do not want the quick returns, they are able to charge reasonable rents, often with some element of Government

subsidy, and we are making it possible in the Local Government Bill for local authorities here to do that. That is why those rents are affordable. It is the short-term operators, the wide boy operators, who have to get the quick buck and the high rents. That is why we want to make it clear that we have to get the serious flows of savings back into providing accommodation for rent. I know that some Labour Members, including, I suspect, some on the Labour Front Bench, know in their hearts that we are right. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne pointed out, Labour Members will come along behind. I am not worried by the catcalling going on. On the catcall scale, it is a good deal lower than during the right-to-buy debates, so perhaps we are on our way already.

A number of points were made about assured tenancies and registration. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear that we were willing to look at practical schemes, but we must be careful lest we make the position worse. If there is a scheme that is alleged to look into the hundreds of thousands of small landlords letting their properties on assured tenancies—that cannot really be done without an unimaginable level of bureaucracy—people such as the person whom my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire mentioned will get on to that list, and the system will not have the capacity to look properly into it. We should be careful that, by inventing a registration scheme which is just a token we do not put the imprint of approval on those whom we do not want approved. It is a difficult task. The hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), for Southwark and Bermondsey and for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) made those points. We shall carefully consider suggestions, but I believe that this matter is much more difficult than hon. Members said.

Clause 106 is a bugbear to some hon. Members. I hope that I can give the assurance sought by the hon. Member for Walton and other hon. Members. All constituency Members who have worked with local authorities on housing matters know that they do not now put people into absurdly large accommodation or very expensive places, charging the cost to the DHSS. Local authorities already use these sorts of powers, and clause 106 is meant to provide a safeguard so that there are not abuses. I think that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey accepted that in the spirit in which it was offered. I assure the hon. Member for Walton that we shall discuss how best to use the powers relating to space so that the unkindness and unfairness to which he referred do not occur.

The proposed housing association reforms were welcomed by all my hon. Friends. It is nice to have my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on my side. Indeed, it is rather encouraging. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that we must support and re-establish the independence of housing associations. That is precisely the Bill's objective. In much of the voluntary sector there is a case for saying that, having been sucked into virtually 100 per cent. dependence on the state for funding, some of the originality and vitality is beginning to be lost. However, housing associations are doing some immensely good work and, partly because they are smaller, their standard of management is higher than that in the larger local authority estates. Several Opposition Members fairly made that point.

The Bill points the way to re-establishing independence and getting away from Treasury control over the amount of provision. However, it will be worth doing only if the sums add up and if the housing associations can continue to provide accommodation at affordable rents for those whom they are designed to help. They are voluntary—we cannot force them to do it. All that would happen would be that the supply would slow down.

I wish to reassure the hon. Member for Brent, South who praised the work of specialist and housing associations. One is RADAR and another UJIMA—although that is now fairly large and confident. There are also the co-operatives. There are bound to be special needs, and that provision will continue to be funded with something like the present 100 per cent. for some time, and perhaps for ever. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch said, in the high-cost areas there is bound to be a need for funding at well above 50 per cent. We have simply given an average for the whole of the country.

I have seen schemes function with much less than 50 per cent. funding, but still letting at affordable rents—and some without any housing association grant where the local authority has contributed the land. Therefore, although we shall watch carefully to ensure that the sums add up, and we believe that they can, the insurance is that the 100 per cent. old system will run alongside while the scheme develops.

The most radical part of the Bill deals with the housing action trusts. It is the first time, apart from the new towns, that central Government will play a role in the improvement of some of the worst housing. If I were a sceptical voice on the Opposition Benches—and there have been one or two today—I would welcome the HATs. As the dwindling number of Opposition Members who have served in Government will know, it is easy for Ministers to stand at this Dispatch Box and lay down the law to local authorities about how easy it all is and how everything must be done in this or that way—preferably with rather less money. We are actually putting our money where our mouths are.

The hon. Member for Brent, South asked what we would actually be doing. The principles involved in the PEP and estate action work are the sort that we want to achieve—often the sort of arrangements in the very best co-operative housing estates that are now working with the private sector. We shall learn all the lessons that we can and then show how, even in the worst estates, those lessons can be applied to rescue some of those who feel abandoned. Hon. Members should not be frightened of that. I was pleased to hear a number of Opposition Members—for example the hon. Member for Knowsley, North—say that the proposal should not be condemned out of hand until we know more about the financing. I have spoken to other Opposition Members, who have not participated in the debate, who made similar comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester, in his maiden speech, made some relevant points. It is easy to say that something that we should do better is the co-ordination of the different services aimed at improving the estates. HATs do give one way forward for experimenting with new forms of co-operation between the different powers and services that need to be employed.

Then we come to the part of the Bill which has caused the most panic—salutory panic—among some of the worst local authorities, the right to choose, the right to transfer, tenants' choice. It was welcomed by a great many

[Mr. Waldegrave]

of my hon. Friends—it would take too long to list them all. There were a number of special points, such as that raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich, which we will look into, and we will write to him. I can assure the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that the right to buy will indeed be transferred with the houses; I can give him an unequivocal answer to that point. We will look into it in more detail in Committee.

The hon. Member for Walton rightly raised the voting system. I can assure him that there will be a vote. I can also assure him that there is no significance in the change of wording between the White Paper and the Bill. We envisage that there will be a vote at some stage. We have been criticised for the proposed voting system. I have no doubt that this will be looked into in great detail in Committee. The point that was not mentioned by any Opposition Member is that we are ensuring that anyone who does not want to be transferred from the local authority will have an absolute right to stay with it. They can have sub-leases back to the local authority. This works very well in a range of private accommodation where there is a multiplicity of different leases.

Mr. Allan Roberts: It will not work.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the hon. Member does not know that, he should be careful before he says that it will not work. I think that it can.

I do not know how widely these powers will be used, but I do know that there are some places in this country, including the constituencies of Opposition Members, where I have been and where I believe that these powers will be of great interest to tenants, because there are very poor managements. This is clearly acknowledged by many people. I have a whole range of cuttings here, from the *South London Press*, from the *Yorkshire Post*, from the *Manchester Evening News*, from the *Leicester Mercury*, listing situations where it is perfectly clear that local management has almost broken down. Sometimes, let us be fair, Labour councillors are saying that, and are trying to improve the situation. But in not all those cases are they successful; and very often the combined power of the direct labour organisation, the district Labour party and other reactionary forces in the neighbourhood prevent them from making any progress.

We need the safety valve. Why should not all our council tenants have rights to the same sort of privileges as were given to them voluntarily by some of the better Labour councils, such as Glasgow? Why should it depend on the kindness of their Labour rulers whether they have these rights? We think that they should have the rights by statute.

It is clear that Labour is at sea on its housing policy, as it is on much else. One of their honourable colleagues wrote recently that Labour

"offered nothing at the last election to the home owners, nothing to deal with the house price folly in London, nothing to those anxious to get on to the housing ladder."

The same author went on to say that Labour was now an "under-party . . . relegated to the periphery of British life.

"We represent,"

he said,

"a world that is going. Our structures and attitudes are policies of the past".

He said that Labour was now

"a penny-farthing with delusions of grandeur".

I would not have used such uncharitable language myself, but the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) obviously knew a little bit more about it than even we on the Government side of the House do.

There are hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench and on the Opposition Back Benches who know that they have to modernise their housing policy. The best of their housing councillors, the best of their housing administrators working for many Labour councils, know that they have to come into the modern world on housing as on so much else. They know that in this country we need a serious private rented sector. They know that the great council estates are unmanageable because they are too big. They know that they need more pluralism. But still the poor old chaps will be told to vote against it here for a year or two, until the attitudes change, while the world passes them by, at which point they will belatedly come along with us. We shall welcome them when they eventually come, and we look forward to that time, because we know that otherwise history will pass them by utterly.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 16, Noes 324.

Division No. 85] **[11.59 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Steel, Rt Hon David
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Howells, Geraint	Wallace, James
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	
Kennedy, Charles	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. John Cartwright and
Livsey, Richard	Mr. Ronnie Fearn.

NOES

Adley, Robert	Bright, Graham
Aitken, Jonathan	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Alexander, Richard	Brooke, Hon Peter
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Allason, Rupert	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Amess, David	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Amos, Alan	Buck, Sir Antony
Arbuthnot, James	Budgen, Nicholas
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Burns, Simon
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Burt, Alistair
Ashby, David	Butcher, John
Aspinwall, Jack	Butler, Chris
Atkins, Robert	Butterfill, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Baldry, Tony	Carrington, Matthew
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Carttiss, Michael
Batiste, Spencer	Cash, William
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Bellingham, Henry	Chapman, Sydney
Bendall, Vivian	Chope, Christopher
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Benyon, W.	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Colvin, Michael
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Conway, Derek
Body, Sir Richard	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Boswell, Tim	Cope, John
Bottomley, Peter	Cormack, Patrick
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Couchman, James
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Cran, James
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Critchley, Julian
Bowis, John	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Curry, David
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Brazier, Julian	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 324, Noes 214.

Division No. 86] **[12.13 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John

Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*

Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loftthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time.
Motion made, and Question put,
That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Alan Roberts.]*
The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 322.

Division No. 87] **[12.27 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loftthouse, Geoffrey

Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.
Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee.

Housing Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required for the payment by the Secretary of State of grants under the Act;

(b) any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make payments to housing action trusts established under the Act;

(c) any other expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act; and

(d) any increase attibutable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums necessary to enable the Secretary of State to make loans to housing action trusts established under the Act;

(3) the issue out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfill guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by a housing action trust so established; and

(4) the payment out of the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mrs. Roe.]*

12.42 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): This resolution should not pass without some comment. First, it is a sloppy and wide-ranging resolution. Secondly, when dealing with money resolutions it is usual to turn to the Bill to look for an explanation. In the introduction to the Bill, there is a paragraph on its financial effects, but it does not say how much money will be spent.

I cannot believe that the Department of the Environment, with its myriad of civil servants in the ugly buildings in Marsham street, is devoid of any possibility of hazarding some sort of reasonably accurate guess about the expenditure that will be undertaken under the terms of the Bill. Of course, central Government Departments are generally much wider of spending targets than local authorities that are continually being attacked by the Government. None the less, the Government have many civil servants who could give some outline of the expenditure involved.

For example under the heading, "Financial effects of the Bill" we read:

"The proposals in Part I of the Bill will result in higher rents for new tenancies granted by private landlords and housing associations and this will in turn lead to some increase in housing benefit expenditure."

That paragraph, allied to the money resolution, means that, by way of this Bill, we are giving authority to provide a subsidy to private landlords by an increase in private housing expenditure. The Department of the Environment must have made some calculation about the financial effect of that. If it has not, then it has been sloppy.

Therefore, I expect the Minister to tell the House how much money the Government will put in the pockets of private landlords. They are the friends of the Government and no doubt they contributed to Tory party finances. The House and the public deserve to know the extent to which this Tory Government propose to pour public cash into the pockets of the landlord sector that invariably supports the Government—and no wonder.

My second point is that the paragraph says:

"Additionally, there will be an increase in expenditure from manpower increases noted below."

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

That refers to the effects of the Bill on public service manpower, which involves finance and the motion that is before us.

We are told, under the heading "Effects of the Bill on Public Service Manpower", that

"additional manpower will be required for Housing Action Trusts, the number dependent on the number and size of the Trusts".

Has the Department decided to take a few additional powers to set up a few quangos, which a Conservative Member spent many years damning in this place? Those who are appointed to quangos have no democratic accountability, it is said, and it is argued by Conservatives that the number of quangos should be reduced. Conservative Members have told us gleefully—this is, when they were in opposition—that they would abolish quangos, but they are introducing legislation that will lead to an increase in the number of quangos. Apparently, the Government have no idea how many more will be set up, and therefore, no idea of the finance that will be involved.

It is claimed that

"The creation of Housing Action Trusts . . . will result in additional spending which will partially be offset by reduced local authority spending".

That is all very well, but we are not given any figures. It seems that the Government are not prepared to hazard a guess. We are in the world of pure conjecture. We have a Government who are supposed to be making careful calculations, and we know that they are spending a great deal of taxpayers' money in so doing. I suppose that we should not be too surprised at the careless approach of the Department of the Environment, bearing in mind that the Bill was produced and printed and then had to be scrapped because the Secretary of State could not proof-read his own work. There were so many mistakes that a completely new Bill had to be printed.

In debating the money resolution, we should say that that sort of carelessness is not good enough. The Department should present a calculation of the money that is involved. How many housing action trusts do the Government envisage establishing? Where are they to be located? How many local authorities do the Government intend to attack by spending more on manpower and womanpower for the trusts and reducing the moneys that are made available to local authorities? Will there be a quid pro quo or a net increase in expenditure? The Bill does not tell us what the outcome will be, and it should.

The trusts will be planning authorities, and under Tory legislation planning means that charges can be made for decisions. Will revenue be set against the cost of increased manpower for the trusts? As *Private Eye* often says, "we should be told" about the costs that will be incurred with the Bill's implementation.

The trusts are designed to erode local accountability and democracy. Although the Government hate the democratic accountability of local authorities, it is a safeguard against excessive expenditure. Against this background, there is an even greater need for us to know the calculations that the Government have in mind when setting up the trusts, which will be quangos.

We know from experience what sort of people the Government will appoint to the quangos. They will be carefully vetted. They will appoint their Tory cronies. They will be those who have done so badly in the private housing sector so far, who have let down manufacturing industry, who have exploited and fiddled in the City. These are the people who will be considered. These people will be accepted only when it is certain that they can present the full party card and full party record for the Secretary of State's approval.

Since they will be the puppets of the Government, it is even more important that we should have some measure to set against their expenditure. We should have some calculation now so that we know in the future whether the puppets of the Secretary of State are carrying out their work according to the standards laid down by the House or whether they are simply frittering away hard-earned taxpayers' money. The Government claim that they seek to safeguard that so carefully, yet they are handing it over to a group of Tories appointed by the Secretary of State.

The Bill says:

"Proposals to introduce new landlords for public sector tenants will lead, at least initially, to an increase in local authority staffing levels and also in central Government levels; the size of those increases will depend on the take-up of the policy."

Do they have any idea about the take-up of the policy? They claim that it will be wildly popular. If their claims are to be substantiated, surely they have made calculations. I am sure they have ordered the desks for the civil servants, allocated the buildings and put the typewriters to one side, but how many? Is it two, three, 50 or even 1,000?

The Bill says that there will be an increase in local authority staffing levels because of the daft scheme in this wretched piece of legislation to give local authority tenants an alternative landlord. The Government always claim that they are cutting back the bureaucratic jungle but they have not made any calculations for the money resolution. They have not made calculations as to the number of civil servants or the cost of the office machinery. Those civil servants will not put brick on brick and mix mortar but build houses. They are part of a bureaucratic jungle that the Government are building up to give tenants an illusory choice and to shift the ownership of their homes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) explained, in some cases, tenants will be shifted whether they like it or not.

There is nothing in the explanatory and financial memoranda about the calculations the Government have made. They claim that their policies are so popular but it appears that they have no idea in their own planning of the extent of the popularity. The House will need to know what sort of increase there will be in local authority staffing and who is to pay. Will the increase in local authority staffing come under the money resolution? We should know.

The Government have been up to some pretty nasty tricks in the past. They produced housing benefit so that they could say that they had dismissed thousands of civil servants. The truth was that they transferred the benefit from central Government to local authorities, paying it from central Government so that they could say that they had got rid of the civil servants. In fact, the local authorities were having to employ more people to administer housing benefit.

Is provision being made to pass on a greater grant support to local authorities, which they need, particularly in view of the rate support grant statement today? Local authorities need every penny that they can get. It would be far more sensible not to have the Bill at all, even though it has received a Second Reading, and spend the money on

other things. I suspect that it amounts to several million pounds and that that is why the Government are so shy. If it was £20,000 or £30,000, they would stand up proudly at the Dispatch Box and say, "We have done our calculations. There is a bit of money going out there but there is some revenue coming in, so, we are talking about a modest sum." If the Government are so coy about the figures, it must be because those figures are higher. The public should know the figures.

Local authorities in Bradford are pressed for cash because the Government have reneged on a pledge. There is £6 million from council house sales that Bradford cannot use to build houses for the people in desperate need. There are thousands of people on the waiting lists —all genuine applicants. We should be going down that path, not squandering money on this mad bureaucratic shambles. This legislation has been produced because a tiny clique, called the Cabinet, with its adherrents in the Department of the Environment, have to convince the Prime Minister that they are going down a road of privatisation and choice. That is a total illusion. Neither the money resolution nor the Bill meets any of the needs of those who are desperate — the homeless who have nowhere to go and the people on the council waiting lists, who are looking to their democratically elected local authorities to build houses. They are denied that opportunity by that clique in the Department of the Environment and the rest of the Government.

We must ensure that there is an adequate explanation from the Minister. I look forward to it with interest to find out whether we are embarking on massive — or minuscule — expenditure and whether the Bill simply represents the many illusions perpetuated by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

12.56 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I am sure that hon. Members appreciate the fact that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has tried to sustain the debate on the money resolution at this late hour. I remind hon. Members, however, that the money resolution simply authorises the payment out of money provided by Parliament under the Act. It does not set tags on the amounts of money to be spent. Hon. Members will have ample opportunities to discuss these detailed points later. If the hon. Member for Bradford, South wants information about the amount of money to be spent on these various policies, I suggest that he look at the public expenditure White Paper, which is to be published in January. Accordingly, I commend the money resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums required for the payment by the Secretary of State of grants under the Act;

(b) any sums required to enable the Secretary of State to make payments to housing action trusts established under the Act;

(c) any other expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act; and

(d) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment; and

(2) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums necessary to enable the Secretary of State to make loans to housing action trusts established under the Act;

(3) the issue out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required to fulfil guarantees given by the Treasury in respect of sums borrowed by a housing action trust so established; and

(4) the payment out of the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.

HOUSING BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Housing Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) provision for requiring certain registered housing associations to make payments to the Secretary of State; and

(2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made and Question proposed.

That in the course of its consideration of the matter of Education in Scotland, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 7th December at half-past 10 o'clock.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

HON. MEMBERS: Object.

PETITION

Rating Reform

12.57 am

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the people of Lennoxtown. They are worried about the effect of the poll tax on a small rural community. The petition reads:

The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act provides for the introduction in Scotland of a system of community charge or poll tax which will impose on the people of Scotland a system of local taxation which will take no account of the ability of the citizens to afford such taxation and will cause hardship to many who are already poor . . . Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Land Registry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12.58 am

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to raise a matter which is of great concern and the cause of considerable hardship and homelessness to many of my constituents and, I suspect, to those of other hon. Members — the delays which they and their solicitors experience because of problems in Her Majesty's Land Registry. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for being here to respond to the debate. I look forward to hearing his proposals for improving the current position, which in the eyes of many, and especially of those professional institutions directly connected with the sale and transfer of land and property, may be wholly unacceptable.

The House will be aware of the valuable work performed by Her Majesty's Land Registry. I was a practising surveyor for many years, so I am well aware that the Land Registration Act imposed upon the Land Registry a system of land registration and ownership that made property transfers in general, and house transfers in particular, a simpler and more efficient process.

However, all is not well. On 30 August *The Sunday Times*, under a banner heading

"Land title delays leave buyers homeless"

stated:

"A staffing crisis at the Government's Land Registry is adding thousands of pounds to the cost of building new houses and forcing them to stand empty even though buyers are ready to move in . . . Solicitors do not usually recommend people to buy a new or converted property unless title deeds have have been drawn up by the Land Registry, which is taking up to 10 months to process them . . . Builders who have borrowed money to finance developments are faced with big interest payments because the newly-built homes are hard to sell without the deeds. The interest is then added to the cost of the property."

The National House Building Council has said that delays are adding up to £3,000 to the cost of a new home. *The Sunday Times* cited the case of someone who had made an offer on a new flat in the south-east of England six months ago. Despite selling his property and being ready to move in, the bank providing his mortgage could not release the funds because the Croydon land registry office had not been able to process the title deeds. All 12 flats in the same development have stood empty for many months for the same reason.

In my constituency of Mid-Staffordshire, a Mr. Parkes of a firm of solicitors in Bore street, Litchfield—Messrs. Keely, Smith and Jobson—wrote to me on 21 October saying:

"As a solicitor in Litchfield I am constantly encountering delays at H.M. Land Registry which seriously complicate conveyancing transactions and lead to extra substantial time and expense being incurred. Examples of delay which I have encountered are too numerous to mention but one recent (and on-going) example is not untypical.

I shall shorten the letter. He said:

"On 10 March, 1987 I completed a very simple transfer of a house from husband and wife to the husband following a divorce settlement. The title to the house was unregistered but because it was in a compulsory registration area the transaction had to be registered at the Land Registry. Registration was applied for immediately and in the acknowledgement it was stated that the application was likely to take about 25 weeks to complete—6 months."

Mr. Parkes cited almost letter by letter and chapter and verse by chapter and verse the correspondence that then took place between his practice and the local office of the Land Registry. He wrote:

"In the meantime the property has been sold and a draft Contract submitted. However, it is quite clear that the sale cannot proceed until the problem has been solved and there is every likelihood that the sale which has been negotiated may fall through as a result of the delay. My client will then have to remarket the property — probably having missed out on the best season for selling."

The client would also incur a considerable sum in abortive fees and expenses.

As the House will know, there are 16 Land Registry offices throughout England and Wales employing 7,310 loyal, permanent, qualified staff — an increase on the 7,029 personnel employed for the 12 months to March. The Land Registry, which I understand is still only partly computerised, made a trading surplus in the last financial year of £26 million. It charges home buyers between £80 and £130 for each registration, depending on the price of the property. That is why I thought it important to raise the matter on the Floor of the House tonight on behalf of my constituents.

The problem is that the Land Registry cannot invest that surplus in increasing its personnel and training its staff. The surplus has to go back to the Treasury. I understand that the Government are refusing to allow it to hire extra staff to overcome the very considerable backlog and the delay in the transfer of property.

A report by the National Audit Office earlier this year called upon the Treasury to invest some of the registry's revenue surplus in new staff, and I understand that senior officers in the Land Registry are now themselves admitting that they have little hope of being able to deal with the backlog or completing the compulsory registration programme on time unless some 1,500 additional staff are engaged. Mr. John Pryer the Chief Land Registrar, is, I believe, on record as saying this—and although I have not cleared this with him personally, it is in the national press to this effect:

"It is embarrassing that we make this money."—

I think that it is wholly to his credit that he makes it—

"We are negotiating with the Treasury to spend some of it on more staff next year but they will take time to train. I am not optimistic about the short term. The people will not see any improvement for at least a year".

He goes on,

"There is little doubt that the reasons for the inordinate delay now being experienced by members of the public and by their solicitors are due to buoyancy in the property market for which the Government in its determination to help people realise their lifelong ambition of home ownership, particularly amongst first-time buyers, should take some credit".

The chief registrar has stated in his annual report to the Lord Chancellor that for some 12 months there has been a high level of activity in the property market, fuelled by a plentiful supply of money available for mortgages. This activity has resulted, in turn, in a substantial increase in the registry's workload — an increase in the volume of work approaching some 25 per cent.

There is no doubt, too, that the substantial rise in the number of applications for first registration is in part due to the continued programme of compulsory registration. It also reflects the general rise in the level of property sales throughout England and Wales. I understand that the total number of registrations this year is the same as in the record year of 1982-83, when the full impact of the Government's right-to-buy legislation was first felt. Over the past 12 months some 51,000 applications arising directly out of the exercise by tenants of their right to buy have been received by the registry. This represents some 12 per cent. of all applications for first registrations which the registry has received.

May I draw my hon. and learned Friend's attention to a number of comments made by the chief land registrar in his current report. Firstly, on dealings in registered land, he says that once again for the sixth successive year an overall increase has been recorded, resulting during that time in the doubling of the volume of applications received to nearly 4·3 million. This year's increase of 19·3 per cent. in the work load is the second highest in the past six years.

On preliminary services, he says that during 1986-87 the number of applications for an official search, office copies and other ancillary services has increased by over 28 per cent. to a total number of transactions of 5·26 million.

In his annual report, the chief land registrar goes on to say,

"Although I take some encouragement from this, I must again draw attention to the fact that the provision of this service does have an adverse effect on the speed and efficiency with which other applications can be processed."

On speed of working, the Chief Land Registrar says,

"During the year completion times have deteriorated very seriously. The rise in the volume of substantive applications has made it quite impossible for the Registry to cope as effectively as it would wish. Furthermore, the need to ensure the maintenance, the high level of service and the regard to applications for official searches and office copy entries necessitated diversion of staff away from dealing with substantive applications".

By producing for the Treasury a surplus of over £26 million on an expenditure of £102 million, a return of about 27 per cent., the Land Registry is the epitome of Government cost-effectiveness, but, because of the unprecedented volume of business and the failure perhaps of the legal profession to anticipate the log jam which would arise from this level of business, the service is falling down on its obligation to provide the public with value for money. The consequence is hardship to all hon. Members' constituents and certainly to mine, leading in some cases to homelessness, as well as to loss of morale within the Land Registry. It is a situation that can be tolerated no longer.

I plead with my hon. and learned Friend, therefore, that something should be done. I wish to put two suggestions to him. First, I suggest that he urges our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to allow — in this particular and extraordinary instance and until the backlog of work has been eliminated — the Land Registry to borrow back the £26 million surplus to enable it to recruit and to train more staff.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I share my hon. Friend's concern about the delays and agree that his suggested solution offers a way out of the problem at the Land Registry. Is he aware, however, that local searches involving records kept by local authorities involve additional delays? Only this week, the *Chartered Surveyor Weekly* reported a case previously reported in the *All England Law Reports* relating to a property in my constituency. In the case of Rignall Developments Limited *v.* Halil, because of the impossibility of obtaining details from the local authority register, it was found that there was a defect in the title that was sold. In that case, which was heard in the chancery division, Mr. Justice Millett said:

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

"the time taken by many local authorities, particularly in London, to reply to inquiries and to deal with applications for official searches of the registers kept by them has become a scandal which threatens the proper working of the free market."

His words applied directly to Southwark's failure in that respect, but I believe that they have application all over the country.

Mr. Heddle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Mr. Justice Millett's words are far more eloquent testimony than I could possible give in support of my case.

My second suggestion is that, with the chief registrar and his colleagues, my hon. and learned Friend should discuss with the Law Society the concept of contracting out to firms of solicitors in the areas where the district Land Registry offices are situated the more routine and mundane matters which are causing the log jam so that qualified staff at the Land Registry's regional offices can deal more expeditiously with first and subsequent registrations.

Finally, I suggest that in the longer term my hon. and learned Friend should review the whole working of the whole system to ensure that the present crisis does not recur. Professional institutions engaged in the purchase, sale and transfer of land and property might be enabled to establish machinery to work alongside the Land Registry so as to ensure its continuing integrity, cost-effectiveness and response to public demand. The Government rightly wish to ensure that people can aspire to home ownership as easily as possible. I believe, therefore, that we have a duty to ensure that that machinery runs smoothly.

1.13 am

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) for raising this important issue, which is the concern of all who are engaged in conveyancing and mortgage activities. My hon. Friend's deep knowledge of the world of property is well known to the House. It is a pleasure to see with him my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who also has deep professional knowledge of these matters, and my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson).

In my response to the debate, I hope to show not only that the Government recognise the substance of my hon. Friend's concerns and the circumstances giving rise to them but that the Lord Chancellor, with the consent of the Treasury, has taken and will continue to take steps to remedy the delays and to modernise and improve still further the valuable services that the Land Registry provides.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Land Registry and it is perhaps indicative of the well-established, well-ordered conduct of the business of the registry that its activities are so rarely discussed in this House. I particularly welcome, therefore, the opportunity to describe the factors that have brought about the present difficulties that the registry and its customers confront and the measures that the Government and the chief land registrar are taking to restore the speed of service that the conveyancing community is entitled to expect.

Development of a national land register has been supported by successive Governments, not only to provide security of title backed by state guarantee and provision for indemnity, but to provide the machinery whereby conveyancing and other property activity can be simplified and costs reduced. Throughout this century, as compulsory registration provisions have been extended to new administrative areas, so the land register in England and Wales has developed, with more and more titles being brought on to the national register. Now, nearly 11 million titles are registered and in excess of 90 per cent. of all conveyancing transactions are handled by the department. My hon. Friend will be glad to know that under present plans, the compulsory programme will be completed by 1990.

One of the most marked developments in this country during this decade has been the growth of home ownership, and the expansion of property activity, greatly aided by the ready availability of mortgage finance. There is a continuing demand by people to buy and to improve their own homes. Not only is there a greater awareness in the private and in the business and commercial sectors that property is a unique asset and a sound investment, but the institutions and finance houses recognise, too, the investment value of mortgage portfolios. This heightened activity in property and in property finance has led to unprecedented numbers of applications being made to the Land Registry, not only in respect of searches and inquiries of the register, but for registration of new owners of land and mortgages.

Widening owner-occupation has been a central and successful feature of Government policy, most notably through the right to buy legislation under the Housing Acts, and we welcome and encourage the continued increase in home ownership and home improvement supported by a buoyant first and second mortgage market. As my hon. Friend rightly said, we are, to some extent, victims of our own success.

For the Land Registry, the continued development of private ownership and property activity has meant an exceptional growth in its commitments with a trebling of the applications received in the past 10 years, a doubling in the past five years with an increase of 25 per cent. in 1986-87 over the preceding year. In the first half of this year, applications received increased by a further 9 per cent. It is this relentless demand for registration services that has led over the past two years to an accumulation of unprocessed applications for registration and consequently to the delays that have prompted this debate.

The work of the Land Registry divides broadly into two main areas. First, precontract and precompletion applications for office copies and official searches of the register and of the public index map. The applications are time-sensitive as they are initiated by or on behalf of intending purchasers or mortgagees seeking essential information and guarantees from the registry prior to the exchange of contracts or prior to the completion of a prospective purchase or loan. These applications, some 5·2 million in 1986-87, currently account for about two thirds of all applications received by the department. They are given priority by the Chief Land Registrar so as to ensure that intended conveyances and mortgage transactions can go forward without delay. It is right to say that not only are 60 per cent. of these applications processed by the registry within its target time of 48 hours, but over 90 per cent. are completed and despatched within four days of receipt.

The second area of work handled by the department is the registration of new owners and new mortgagees following completion of conveyancing transactions. These substantive registrations account for the remaining one third of all applications received and totalled 2·6 million in 1986-87. Because of the massive growth in its work load the Land Registry has had to deploy an increasing proportion of its available manpower resource on the time-sensitive precontract and precompletion searches and office copies, leaving a reduced proportion to contain the substantive applications for registration which have also increased in number. It is to the credit of the Land Registry and its staff that it has in successive years increased the total number of applications processed and, in 1986-87, completed a record number of applications and achieved a productivity improvement of more than 3 per cent.

Over the period of five years between April 1982 and March 1987 the Land Registry secured an increase in its permanent manpower of nearly a third, but since early 1985 staffing levels had not kept pace with the rapidly rising work loads which have greatly exceeded expectations. This factor is the root cause of the present difficulties.

Under the legislation governing its activities, the Land Registry is required to raise, through fees, sufficient money to cover all its outgoings. Fees are based, for most transactions, on the value of the property. With rapidly growing intakes and the rise in property values total registry fee income has increased markedly, generating surpluses in excess of the approved expenditure limits authorised under Supply procedures. The Land Registry has sought to limit its fees and so to limit the growth in its potential total fee income with the making of two fee orders in 1985 and 1986, each of which had the effect of reducing the fee-earning capacity of the fee scales. Nevertheless, the reductions in the fee scales were more than offset by the high level of activity and the rise in property prices. As a result, significant surpluses of fee income over expenditure authorisations have been paid into the Consolidated Fund. My hon. Friend was right to make that point. It has always been the case that if the Chief Land Registrar were able more readily to direct registry fee income into additional resource in order to maintain registry services, he could ensure that arrears of uncompleted applications did not accumulate and an efficient and prompt service be maintained at all times. My hon. Friends will be pleased to hear that the Government have accepted that there may be circumstances in the case of fee-earning bodies which are self-financing, such as the Land Registry, where net control could be preferable to fixed expenditure limits provided that acceptable efficiency criteria and performance yardsticks are used to ensure value for money. Such an approach would provide for the additional revenues generated by the increased volumes of applications to pay for the staff and other resources that the Land Registry needs to maintain the output necessary, if the speed of services is to be maintained.

The Land Registry and Her Majesty's Treasury have examined alternative financing arrangements and I am also pleased to be able to state that this month my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has agreed new arrangements which will be established as from the coming financial year and which will exempt the Land Registry from gross running cost control. This will provide far greater flexibility and greater scope for the Chief Land Registrar to direct fee income toward registration services.

It is thus clear that the Land Registry must now be brought up to a strength which matches the conveyancing and mortgage business generated in England and Wales and so enable it to meet the demands made upon it. In view of the growing arrears of unprocessed work the Land Registry sought and secured in July, by way of a summer Supplementary Estimate, an increase of 500 permanent posts for the current year. The majority of these posts have now been filled with new recruits and a massive training programme is now under way. Apart from that specific increase and the underlying changes in the basis of financing to which I have already referred, I am pleased to be able to say that as part of the annual public expenditure survey an appropriate and significant increase in expenditure and manpower has been approved for 1988-89 which will enable the Department to meet its projected commitments for that year and contain, and eventually reduce, the backlog of outstanding casework.

To meet the growth in its business the Land Registry is developing, as a matter of high priority, its regional structure. New offices have been opened in Telford, Coventry and Hull and are presently giving valuable assistance to the hard-pressed district registries in the south. In 1988 it is planned that each of these sub-offices takes on responsibility for its own area as a district registry in its own right. Two further offices are likely to be opened before 1990. These developments will serve to take the pressure off the most heavily burdened district registries especially those in the south where conveyancing activity has been especially high.

In September last year the Land Registry introduced computer processing at its Plymouth district registry. Under the new system registers in conventional form are computerised as transactions arise, so facilitating the processing of all subsequent transactions affecting the computerised titles. Already some 100,000 titles have been computerised and 20 per cent. of transactions affecting registered land received at Plymouth relate to these titles. Following an evaluation of the project at Plymouth approval has now been given to introduce computer operations at all district registries. Implementation is planned for the Gloucester and Swansea offices in 1988 and progressively to all other district registries over the next five years.

The Land Registry is the custodian of a valuable, unique and active record of land ownership for England and Wales and provides the essential machinery for simplifying and modernising the conveyancing process. I am confident—I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestions—that with the measures that I have referred to and the continued endeavours of the Chief Land Registrar and his staff the registry will restore the levels and speed of service that it and its customers want to see.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 3 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

1. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding his proposals for financial delegation to schools and colleges.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): There have been over 700 responses to the consultation paper on financial delegation to schools, and some 350 responses to the paper on further education.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Secretary of State aware that 87 per cent. of our schools—24,000 in all—have fallen into a state of disrepair and need exceptional repairs to put them back in order? As one who is entirely honest, because he went to the same school as I did, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us that his financial delegation will cure the backlog of repairs?

Mr. Baker: I believe that the building that the hon. Gentleman and I shared as schoolboys has fallen down. To be more precise, it sank into the sands of Southport, and has been partly, indeed substantially, rebuilt. That is rather wide of the question, but the hon. Gentleman will know that I have secured for next year, in the financial settlement, a substantial increase in the capital allocations for schools, amounting to an increase of some 22 per cent. in the capital allocations over this year.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that delegations to schools will allow for the more efficient use of resources? It will allow parents, teachers and governing bodies to decide for themselves the priority of the school, which must be to the considerable advantage of education.

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is probably agreed on both sides of the House that the delegation of budgets to governing bodies and heads should go ahead. Indeed, it is going ahead very strongly at present. Practice will anticipate the provisions of the Bill in this respect.

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline his plans for the future of comprehensive education in England and Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is for local education authorities to consider how to organise school provision in their areas. Where proposals for changes in the existing pattern come to me for decision, I shall continue to consider them on their individual merits.

Mr. McAllion: The Secretary of State will be aware of the recent Edinburgh university study which was commissioned by the Scottish Office and which welcomed the improvement in the standards of Scottish education, brought about by the introduction of comprehensive schools. In particular, it welcomed the increase in the number of pupils staying on beyond the statutory school leaving age and the substantial increase in the number of pupils obtaining ordinary and higher grade qualifications.

Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore undertake to arrange for a similar study to be conducted for England and Wales? Does he accept that if he did so his time would be far better spent than it is now in trying to dismantle the comprehensive system south of the border through his great education reform Bill?

Mr. Baker: The study to which the hon. Gentleman refers by no means shows a causal link between comprehensive reorganisation and examination success. However, as the hon. Gentleman has asked me to consider setting up a study in England and Wales, he should be aware of the Welsh study, published early this year, of a community where education was comprehensive in half the area and selective in the other half. The authors found that the selective schools were superior in a range of outcomes, including reading scores and examination results. Comprehensives failed most with pupils of average and below average ability.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our proposals for comprehensive schools are entirely in keeping with the findings of the second Vatican council, which concluded that parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children should have true liberty in their choice of schools?

Mr. Baker: I am very glad to have support from the second Vatican council. I am encouraged to believe that it has pointed out in a clear way the importance of parental choice in education, which has appeared in the statute law of this country for several centuries. That is one of the main thrusts of the Bill that we shall be discussing later.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that although the Minister is asked about his future plans for comprehensive education, in fact his main plan is to utterly destroy it? Why does he not say so? Why is he waging a vendetta against it? Does he not realise that if he compares selective schools and comprehensive schools within a certain area, the so-called comprehensive schools cannot possibly be comprehensive if they are at the side of a selective system?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should refer to the Welsh study. It drew considerable comment when it was published earlier this year. It is not our intention to destroy

comprehensive schools. There are many fine comprehensive schools which serve their communities and their children very well.

3. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals will be contained in the Education Reform Bill to promote greater choice in education in rural areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): The Education Reform Bill will increase the scope for informed choice in education among all parents. It will help to raise standards in all schools, wherever they may be located.

Mr. Leigh: Does my hon. Friend agree that the ability of parents to choose in rural areas is limited, not just by artificial limits set on the size of schools—that situation will be rectified by clause 17 of the Education Reform Bill—but by the cost of travel to a favoured school, which in an area such as Lincolnshire can be as far as 10 miles away? Will my hon Friend consider the creation of rural travel education vouchers to extend freedom of choice to parents?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend will have to accept, as I do, that parental choice inevitably has to operate within the context of the area in which the school is situated. Even where there is only one school, for example, parents will still be able to apply to the Secretary of State for it to be withdrawn from local authority control. The advantages of the national curriculum and financial delegation will still obtain.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister recall that the Audit Commission, in its response to the Government's proposals about open enrolment, said that unless the Government instituted a system to extend home-school transport costs in rural areas poorer families would effectively be inhibited from having a choice because they would not be able to meet transport costs? What does he intend to do about that, or are poorer families not supposed to have a choice?

Mr. Dunn: Whether a school is in a town or the country, positive improvements in achievement will result once the Bill, to be voted upon later today, becomes law. Many provisions will bite on the school to its advantage. The dark days of poor performance against international competition are over. Nothing is going to be the same again.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will my hon. Friend pay close attention to the problems of transport? It is a real difficulty if genuine choice is to be maintained. The choice may be between schools that are four miles or seven miles away. Parents feel strongly about that and I hope that my hon. Friend will give the House an assurance that he will look carefully at the problem.

Mr. Dunn: The provision of school transport is a matter for the local education authority. Current arrangements are not affected by the Bill, except that local education authorities will have to treat pupils equally, whether they attend local education authority or grant-maintained schools.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that some of the proposals contained in his Bill will mean that some rural schools will be under threat of closure because, to date, they have been supported by additional resources from local education authorities and that LEA planning has kept numbers at a viable level? Will he tell the House whether he will put money into those schools to ensure that they are able to be retained in those areas?

Mr. Dunn: The Government recognise that many small village schools have to be retained because of the geographical isolation of the communities they serve, especially where the alternative schools would necessitate unacceptably long journeys for young children. For some years we have had the sparsity factor in the allocation of grants from Government.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that Lancashire county council is wickedly proposing to try to close five rural schools near me? Is he further aware of the volume of opposition, which is growing hourly?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend misses no opportunity to bring to the House the case of her constituents. I can assure her that when the Lancashire education authority proposes to close schools she will be given every opportunity to bring to me and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State her views and those of her constituents on the proposals for closure.

University Dental Schools

4. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any plans to reorganise university dental schools; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): A review of dental education by the University Grants Committee is now under way.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister recognise that the review is causing concern among those involved in dental care? Will he give an assurance that there will be no closure or enforced merger of existing dental schools?

Mr. Jackson: I cannot anticipate the result of the report. It will have to take into account the fact that several dental schools are already at or below the minimum size that enables the curriculum to be adequately covered by economic staffing levels. The hon. Gentleman knows that the dental manpower review has recommended a 10 per cent. cut in intake.

Mr. Holt: Would my hon. Friend care to speak to his colleagues about the number of dentists in training in Southern Ireland to see whether, under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, he can achieve a cut in the numbers in training in Ireland, just as the number training in this country was cut from 4,000 to 2,600? Ultimately, all our dentists could be Irish if something is not done about this.

Mr. Jackson: We have no jurisdiction in the Republic of Ireland, but I promise my hon. Friend that I shall inquire into the matter.

ILEA (South-West Quadrant Review)

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the Inner London education authority's south-west quadrant review.

Mr. Dunn: Representations have been received from three hon. Members and a number of parents. Since the

Inner London education authority has not yet published statutory proposals for schools in the south-west quadrant, the matter remains one for the authority.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister will be aware that the education committee and the authority have now made their decision and that it is on the way to his Department. Included in that decision is the proposal to amalgamate and thus end the life of the London Nautical school in my constituency. Parents, local hon. Members and, indeed, some members of the majority group in ILEA are greatly concerned that the London Nautical school might disappear. Will the Minister undertake that the decision whether to implement or to change the proposals of the education authority will be made speedily and that the London Nautical school in particular will receive favourable consideration from him and his colleagues?

Mr. Dunn: Given the size of the proposals, which I have yet to receive, it may be some time before we can adjudicate upon them. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government attach considerable importance to increasing parental choice and that the extent of local support or opposition is a relevant factor in our consideration of proposals.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: I note with pleasure my hon. Friend's response and I note, too, that he has rejected ILEA's proposals in relation to the north-east quadrant. Will he take note that many parents in my constituency, and parents of children who go to school in my constituency, do not believe that tertiary education is the only way in which to deal with 16 to 19-year-olds? There is a place for sixth forms and for schools such as the London Nautical school and the William Penn school, both of which are matters of great concern.

Mr. Dunn: I note my hon. Friend's fervour on the matter. I remind the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State considers each proposal on its merits. In the case referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), my right hon. Friend was not satisfied that the proposal relating to Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington offered good value for the considerable capital costs involved, or that it did enough to tackle the problem of surplus capacity in secondary schools in those areas.

Primary and Secondary Schools

6. **Mr. Anthony Coombes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money is being spent per pupil in 1987 in primary and secondary schools, as compared with the sum spent in January 1979.

Mr. Dunn: Based on a provisional distribution by sector of estimated total current spending by local authorities, an average of £1,115 was spent on each primary and secondary pupil in England in 1986-87, which is 30 per cent. more in real terms than in 1978-79.

Mr. Coombes: I warmly welcome those figures. However, will my hon. Friend confirm that international experience, recent independent research, Her Majesty's inspectors' reports and the experience in some parts of ILEA have all confirmed the falsehood of the assertion that there is an automatic relationship between spending more money and achieving higher educational standards? Will he also confirm that what is really important is a national curriculum, with unequivocal benchmarks, which are sensitively assessed, which give parents the confidence that they need in the educational system and make that system more responsive?

Mr. Dunn: I answer yes on all counts. For too long the debate on the future of education in this country has been focused solely on what goes into a school. Our proposals in the Education Reform Bill will focus on what comes out of a school. Therefore, quality control will be an important vehicle in measuring delivery.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Would the Minister care to comment on certain figures that I obtained from the Library? During 1979-80, using 1986 prices, over £9 billion was spent. It was not until 1986-87 that more money was spent. In 1978-79 the average amount spent per pupil was over £1,100. It was not until 1986-87 that the figure went up to £1,300. That per pupil increase can be accounted for by falling rolls. There was no real increase in education spending until 1986-87.

Mr. Dunn: I completely reject what the hon. Gentleman has said. Conservative and Labour authorities are spending more. We must establish whether expenditure is gaining results and reflects value for money.

Mr. John Townend: How much money per pupil is spent by ILEA on secondary education? How does it compare with what is spent by shire counties? Does my hon. Friend consider that the quality of education in London justifies the differential?

Mr. Dunn: No, I do not. I note that an article in today's *Daily Mail* states:

"It costs more to educate a teenager at an inner London comprehensive school than the fees at some of the city's private schools."

That statement challenges the Opposition to do something about spending in inner London.

Mr. Straw: The Prime Minister herself has boasted of an increase in spending per pupil between 1979 and 1986. How does the Under-Secretary of State square that boast with the fact that, in real terms, the Government have cut their Exchequer contribution to the nation's education by 20 per cent. over those eight years?

Mr. Dunn: The financing of local government through the rate support grant settlement is designed to make local authorities more accountable for their spending on services generally. It ill-behoves Opposition Members to condemn what we have done when we have achieved so much more in education in the past few years.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that Barnet has the best A-level results of any authority in the country and that ILEA, which spends much more than Barnet, has among the worst results?

Mr. Dunn: I confirm what my hon. Friend said. By comparison, Barnet makes other authorities seem so much worse.

City Technology Colleges

7. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement on the progress towards establishing city technology colleges.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Sponsorships for four city

technology colleges have already been announced. The Kingshurst CTC will open next year, and the Nottingham CTC in 1989. We are making good progress in discussions with a number of other prospective sponsors.

Mr. Fisher: How does the Minister account for the fact that, after such a long time, she can produce only such a microscopically small list of achievements? Does she attribute that to the unpopularity of the idea with business and parents, or to its total irrelevance?

Mrs. Rumbold: It may disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but the initiative was announced just over a year ago by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We have four city technology colleges on the stocks. More city technology colleges will be commenced in the near future. We shall certainly make announcements about them in the not too distant future.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Did my hon. Friend see the article in last Friday's edition of *The Times* by Dr. John Rae, a former headmaster of Westminster school? He said that there were some disturbing implications in the sort of syllabus that would be in order at Kingshurst CTC. Will she confirm that we are looking for high standards at that school?

Mrs. Rumbold: We are most certainly looking for high standards at Kingshurst and, with the appointment of Mrs. Valerie Bragg, I am confident that we shall achieve them.

Mr. George Howarth: Is the Minister aware that any attempt to establish a CTC in Knowsley by scurrying around with officials like thieves in the night would be extremely ill-received by the population at large, teaching staff and parents in the area?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not know that the local education authority approached the Department to see whether it would be possible for us to visit the area to help set up a CTC.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister will know that the Government have deliberately excluded their pet CTCs from the state curriculum. Do they not have even that much faith in their own convictions?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. CTCs will be encouraged to follow the national curriculum, but they will have time allocated to them to pursue technology and science, which is what we expect from them.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the term "city technology college" is rather ambiguous? Might it not equally be used to describe Eton college, which teaches the technology of the City to would-be market makers and commodity dealers? Could that not be what the Old Etonian who tabled the question had in mind?

Mrs. Rumbold: Sadly, I am unable to read the mind of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). I believe that the name city technology college is excellent and that it will attract many parents, as is the case at Kingshurst.

Mr. Fatchett: Now that it is clear that the Government have failed to sell the scheme to industrialists, will the Minister say what criteria will be used in the only CTC that is off the ground and running — that in Solihull — to assess parents? We know that they are to be tested if their children are to gain a place there. What will happen if the child passes the test and the parents fail? Does the Department have a view about whether the parent or the child should attend the college?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman displays much ignorance. A substantial number of industrialists—more since June — have expressed an interest in the idea of CTCs. It is with confidence that we shall establish the full 20 CTCs in the not too distant future. Children in comprehensive schools are being interviewed with their parents, as we have always made it clear that we want commitment from both. They should attend because CTCs provide the type of education that they want. At Solihull we now have more than 300 applicants for 180 places.

Higher Education

8. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library copies of the representations which he has received in response to the White Paper "Higher Education — Meeting the Challenge".

Mr. Jackson: There have been wide-ranging discussions surrounding the White Paper since its publication in April and there is no simple record. However, copies of organisations' responses to the three associated consultative documents are already in the Library.

Mr. Archer: I am grateful to the Minister for his kindness. As the proposed criteria for the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council funding include a requirement that at least 55 per cent. of a college's students should be in the advanced further education category, and since many major mixed economy colleges will not qualify because of policies which they have deliberately pursued and have been encouraged to pursue, can the Minister assure the House that they will continue to receive adequate local authority funding, or does he intend that higher education should be hived off and become academically isolated and privatised?

Mr. Jackson: It is certainly not the intention that higher education should be hived off. We believe that it is desirable that there should continue to be mixed economy colleges, and we shall look to local authorities to continue to support them.

Dr. Hampson: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are a great many people in higher education who do not see the point of creating two funding bodies — one for polytechnics and colleges and one for universities — which match each other? Can we not reconsider and have one funding body for the whole of higher education?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend asks a fundamental question. We must go back to the speech by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1966 about the different missions of the different institutions in the so-called binary system. We do not believe that it is right at this stage, when polytechnics and colleges are emerging into a new sector, to terminate the arrangement.

Dr. Thomas: Is the Minister satisfied with the efficient management of the higher education system in Wales as it applies to his Department? The Welsh Office is in charge of higher education — with the exception of the University of Wales—but no structure exists within the proposed Universities Funding Council system for

separate consideration of the funding of the University of Wales. Such a structure exists in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Mr. Jackson: The representation of Welsh higher education institutions within the structure of the UFC is under consideration. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be able to say something about it in due course.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that one of the best parts of the White Paper was the Government's commitment to greater access to education for adults? Will he say how much money the Government will put up to make it easier for adults to gain access to education? How will he co-ordinate the provision for adults returning to education between FE and HE colleges, polytechnics and universities? Do we not need a national co-ordinating body to allocate resources and courses for adults returning to education, or is it the Government's intention to apply competition so that these institutions compete for students and resources?

Mr. Jackson: The Government's commitment to this matter is plain. There has been an increase of 160,000 students in the system since 1979, an 8 per cent. increase in UGC funding—following a 10·2 increase last year—and a 9 per cent. increase in funding for polytechnics and colleges this year. That is ample evidence of the Government's commitment to achieving their target.

Education Reform

9. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science for how long he will be prepared to receive representations about the proposed Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The consultation process that we embarked on in the summer was designed to inform the drafting of the Education Reform Bill. We shall continue to take account of comments received during the Bill's passage through Parliament, and after that as we get to its detailed implementation.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on stimulating a long and unprecedented consultation and debate on the Education Reform Bill proposals before and during the general election, throughout the teachers' holidays — which are intended not only for teacher relaxation but for study—and throughout the autumn. For the benefit of Opposition Members, will he confirm that that consultation and debate will continue until the Bill becomes law and thereafter?

Mr. Baker: I first spoke of the national curriculum over a year ago, and I spoke to the Select Committee in April of this year. These issues have been before the country for some considerable time, and during the formal period of consultation we received 17,000 responses to the various consultation documents, including 8,500 on the national curriculum.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Secretary of State aware that representations are coming in practically every day—certainly in my constituency — including one this morning from the elected board of governors of Fitton Hill junior school, who are saying that the speed at which he is trying to implement so many drastic changes in education is likely to cause instability in the education service?

Mr. Baker: Throughout the centuries complaint has been made of many of my predecessors when they have tried to instigate education reform. We intend to take into account the various representations that are made as the Bill goes through the House. Many of the details of the Bill will depend on secondary legislation, and there will be further consultation on that as well.

Mr. Boswell: Has my right hon. Friend learnt from representations that have been made on behalf of the classics, home economics and many other subjects the importance of non-foundation subjects in differentiating individual schools? Will he consider bringing forward proposals so that individual schools may emphasise their distinctive and different educational interests and attainments?

Mr. Baker: Some representations that we received on the national curriculum dealt specifically with this point and wanted greater flexibility in the curriculum. I can assure the House that that is what we shall have. I shall be setting out our proposals in that regard in my speech later this afternoon.

Mr. Madden: If the Education Reform Bill becomes law, what opportunities will be afforded to independent schools to opt into the maintained sector?

Mr. Baker: On independent schools, may I make it clear that they are to be registered and when inspectors inspect them they will want to see that they conform broadly to the national curriculum. Many independent schools already have a curriculum very close to the national curriculum.

Student Grants

10. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to replace the system of parental contribution in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are currently reviewing the whole system of financial support for undergraduate students and plans to publish their proposals by the middle of next year.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that it is quite wrong that the grant payable to an adult student somewhat past the age of majority should be dependent on his pedigree rather than on his personal circumstances. Will my hon. Friend join any individual or institution who would wish to take this injustice to the European Court of Human Rights? I know that my hon. Friend is a committed and enthusiastic European, so if not, will he say why not?

Mr. Jackson: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. I am afraid that I could not personally associate myself with such an initiative.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the Minister guarantee that students starting next September and the September after that will not have loans imposed on them?

Mr. Jackson: I am afraid that I cannot anticipate in any way the results of the review. If we were to introduce any system of loans it would be necessary to introduce legislation. That would have certain effects on timing.

Education Reform

11. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received on the subject of the opting out proposals in the Education Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have received over 900 written responses to my recent consultation paper, from a wide range of sources, together with a variety of less formal representations.

Mr. Evans: The representations are encouraging. Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the Bill becomes law the inquiries will increase substantially and, furthermore, that pupils will at last be educated according to the wishes of their parents?

Mr. Baker: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that this will prove to be a very popular measure and will implement the very phrase in his question, which he drew from the Education Act 1944.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: Does the Secretary of State agree that the main objection to the opting-out proposals is not that they will increase parental choice or break the local education authority monopoly on education, but that they will reintroduce the possibility of selection by ability?

Mr. Baker: I want to make it clear to the hon. Lady that when schools decide to opt out the Bill makes it clear that the character of the school will have to remain the same and the admissions policy will have to be agreed. The policy which the remnants of her party are putting forward represents a considerable extension of opting out. I think that the three of them in that party have now become experts in opting out.

Schools (Local Firms)

12. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any further plans to encourage commercially run industrial firms to maintain a close interest in schools in their locality; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My colleagues and I miss no opportunity to encourage these links. A particularly valuable opening arises from the requirement on most schools from next September to have representation of the business community on their governing bodies. I hope that people will seize it.

Mr. Favell: After years of bemoaning, with justification, the way in which young people are equipped for commerce and industry, is it not true that my right hon. Friend is presenting business with a great opportunity to do something about this?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is absolutely true that my right hon. Friend is doing precisely that. It is also true that last month at its conference the CBI announced the creation of a new education task force that will look at ways of developing links between schools and industry. I hope that both initiatives will prove very successful.

City Technology Colleges

14. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when it is anticipated that a date will be announced for the opening of the Teesside city technology college in Langbaurgh.

Mrs. Rumbold: There has been considerable interest in the establishment of a CTC on Teesside. A number of possible sites have been suggested and are being examined. It is too soon to announce the date of opening.

Mr. Holt: This is very disappointing, because the site at Langbaurgh was earmarked first. If the Government are putting CTCs in areas of greatest need in order to improve inner cities, Solihill does not seem to me to have quite the same priority as Langbaurgh. I hope that my hon. Friend will review her answer and come back with an early date.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that my hon. Friend will know that we are doing our best to make sure that Teesside has a CTC as soon as possible, so that his constituency and the parents of children there will be able to benefit from it.

Miss Mowlam: In response to an earlier question about CTCs the Minister told us that she was keen that they should follow the national curriculum. If she is so keen, why was that not put in the Bill?

Mrs. Rumbold: For the hon. Lady's information, the recommendation is that all the CTCs should follow the broad plans of the national curriculum and have plenty of opportunity within the time that is not so allocated to pursue those parts of technology and science that are important to them. They will have greater scope in their freedom to do that.

School Closures

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to change the procedures concerning school closures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend think it right that some schools should be under almost continuous threat of closure? Is he aware that Waterhouses and Warslow middle schools in my constituency, both of which were opened a mere seven years ago, are under threat of closure for the second time? Is that fair? What chance have those schools ever had?

Mr. Dunn: How a local education authority reacts to a situation in which it may have to take schools out of use is a matter for the local education authority. My hon. Friend can make his point during the objection process to proposals that affect the future of a school or schools.

Mr. Skinner: Will schools that are threatened with closure be able to opt out?

Mr. Dunn: A school that is threatened with closure can apply to be considered for grant-maintained status alongside the proposals to close. We shall, of course, consider the application to opt out first before we decide on the second course.

Education Reform

16. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received about his proposals to allow schools to opt out of local education authorities' jurisdiction.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Hayes: When considering whether a school should be grant-maintained, will my right hon. Friend take into account the effect of that on other schools, which may be efficient and popular, in the same area?

Mr. Baker: In the process of opting out there will be time for the publication and advertisement of details, and the procedures under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 will have to be followed. I have no doubt that the other schools in the area, and the LEA, will make representations to me or the holder of my office.

Mr. Heffer: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that some of us think that the schools that will opt out will be those in the posher areas, and perhaps those that are concerned with racial prejudice? Is he also aware that some of us who had no choice at any time in our education consider that we were fortunate when we look over on the other side of the House?

Mr. Baker: I do not know how much further the hon. Gentleman would have gone if his parents had had greater choice in his education. I would only say to him that he is wrong to believe that it is only the schools in what he describes as the posher areas that will be interested in grant-maintained status. I think that all schools will be interested, and schools in our inner cities will welcome the opportunity, which they do not have now, for the parents and governing bodies, if they are so interested, to have a greater say in determining the education of their children, and, in many cases, improving it substantially.

Mr. Gow: During the consultation period on opting out, what representation did my right hon. Friend receive from his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Baker: I do not recall receiving any representations from my right hon. Friend on these matters. I know that he follows education matters closely and I am sure that we look forward to his contribution later today.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State knows all about that, because he was the right hon. Gentleman's Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the governors of a formerly comprehensive school which has opted out will be able to apply for a change in character of their school and so become selective?

Mr. Baker: From the word go I have clearly said that when a school opts out and becomes grant-maintained, for five years from the date of application there will be no change in its admission policy, but after that time, if a school wishes to change its character, it can submit proposals under the procedures in sections 12 and 13 of the 1980 Act. However, the hon. Gentleman is mistaken if he thinks that comprehensive schools will necessarily want to become grammar schools. A grammar school may well want to become a comprehensive school and a comprehensive may well want to move closer to being a CTC.

17. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding his proposals for a national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The most recent count informs me that as at 27 November we had received 9,300 responses dealing with the national curriculum, out of a total of some 18,500 for all the consultative papers. Of the 9,300, about 5,000 had been received by 30 September.

Mr. Yeo: Is my hon. Friend aware that in addition to those organisations, such as trade unions, which are very quick to make representations, there exists a huge silent majority of parents who may not have made representations but who are passionately concerned with the quality of education in our schools, and that it is the existence of that silent majority that ensures that the Government's proposals for a national curriculum will be very widely welcomed?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is perfectly true, as my hon. Friend has observed, that there are large numbers of people who do not write in in response to consultation documents. There are many people who have spoken to me and to my right hon. and hon. Friends in wide and general support of our proposals for a national curriculum because they see it as an opportunity to improve educational choice and to procure the advancement of their children in schools.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Denmark.

Ms. Ruddock: What advice will the Prime Minister give to Gaynor Price-Rowlands, the intensive care nurse who is featured in the *Today* newspaper, who, after five years of training, is earning £7,600 on the National Health Service and who says that she could earn £5,000 more per annum in the private sector?

The Prime Minister: First, I would say that nurses, including paediatric nurses in intensive care, are earning far more under this Government than they were under the last Labour Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer"].

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must have an opportunity to answer.

The Prime Minister: Their earnings have risen by an extra 30 per cent. in real terms. Secondly, I would say that the very scheme that was criticised a few days ago from the Opposition Benches means that nurses working in key specialties such as intensive care stand to benefit from the proposals currently being considered in the nursing and midwifery negotiating council. For the first time the new structure will recognise—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Faulds: What is the right hon. Lady's advice?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very bad form to shout like that.

Mr. Faulds: Answer the question.

The Prime Minister: Let us get the facts first — I know that the hon. Gentleman does not like them. For the first time, that structure will recognise the increasing clinical skills of nurses, midwives and health visitors and

those with specialist qualifications. Do not listen to the Opposition is the advice that I would give to the nurses. Listen to the party which has provided more for the nurses and which will provide an improved structure.

Q2. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity of reading reports in today's national press that the cost of educating children in the Inner London education authority is much the same as that of educating children in independent schools? Given the quality of education that comes from ILEA, does she agree that more funds and more resources do not equal better education? Does she further agree that the Education Reform Bill, which will be debated today, is the real signpost forward?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the Inner London education authority is notorious for its extravagance, but not famous for the results that it obtains for children within its care. The Education Reform Bill will give London boroughs the chance to opt out of ILEA and also give any school the chance to opt out of ILEA or those boroughs. The Bill will therefore provide more choice and opportunity.

Mr. Kinnock: When Britain's real interest rates are among the highest of all the developed countries, and when the pound is rising to levels that inflict serious disadvantages on our exporters, why will the Government not use their power to bring about a significant cut in interest rates?

The Prime Minister: We shall reduce interest rates when it is prudent to do so. Any announcement will be made in the customary way, adopted by all Governments, through the Bank of England, but only when it is prudent to do so.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell me what is prudent about imposing unnecessary cost burdens on British producers and British households? What is prudent about ensuring that the pound stays at a level that will make our export performance less advanced than it otherwise could be? Under the Prime Minister, British exports have risen by 30 per cent. and imports by 75 per cent. Is that the trend that the Prime Minister wants to see continue?

The Prime Minister: Our financial policy has stood the test of eight years. It has a soundness and success that is envied by other countries and it has led to a higher standard of living than any standard previously enjoyed in this country. I find it somewhat ironic to hear about industrial costs from the right hon. Gentleman, when his Government put on a national insurance surcharge which we had to take off.

Mr. Kinnock: One thing that can certainly be said about the Prime Minister's financial policy is that no one knows what it currently is. Is the Prime Minister talking about the medium-term financial strategy, which has now been utterly abandoned? Is she talking about M3, the money measure, which has now been utterly abandoned, or is she talking about not intervening in the currency markets when her Government are spending billions of pounds trying to save the dollar? If the Prime Minister wants to be consistent in her belief that there should not be burdens on British industry, why does she not cut interest rates now?

The Prime Minister: I have given the right hon. Gentleman the answer to his first question. If he does not know what our financial and economic policy is, he must be living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

Mr. Brittan: In view of yesterday's deeply deplorable French hostage deal, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today of re-affirming the Government's long-standing policy of not doing such deals with terrorists or their sponsors? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such deals virtually guarantee that more hostages will be taken in future?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that treating with terrorists only leads to more kidnappings and violence. That is why we will not do that. The best defence against terrorists is to make it clear that we will never give in to their demands. That has been, and will continue to be, our policy.

Mr. Steel: When the Prime Minister goes to the European summit in Copenhagen next week will she raise this matter, as the European Community is supposed to have a common policy in this respect?

The Prime Minister: The matter is bound to come up at the European summit later this week. I shall reiterate our policy then. I believe that our policy is the best and the only policy to defeat terrorists.

Q3. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hargreaves: Many hon. Members and many thousands of people throughout the country who have been campaigning for Anna Chertkova, who has been imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital in Russia for 13 years simply for being a Christian, will share my delight at the recent announcement that she is likely to be released in January. When my right hon. Friend meets Mr. Gorbachev, will she thank him for the progress in Anna's case so far? Will she also urge him to ensure that the release takes place?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's hope that Mrs. Chertkova will be released. I am aware that a number of people have been released since I went to Moscow and indeed before that—*[Interruption.]* I am surprised that Opposition Members find this a laughing matter.

I left a long list of cases with the Soviet Government, and a number of people have been released. However, there are many thousands more inside. We hope that Mrs. Chertkova will indeed be released in January. It will be a comparatively short meeting on Monday, at which I shall not be able to raise individual cases although, of course, human rights will be raised, as always.

Mr. Vaz: Has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read Saturday's edition of the *Leicester Mercury*, in which it was announced that £240,000 of Government money would be spent on a private hospital in Leicester? Is she as appalled as I am at that misuse of public money?

Does she not agree that if there is money to be spent on the Health Service it should be spent on National Health Service hospitals, and not on private hospitals?

The Prime Minister: The money spent on the National Health Service has gone up enormously—*[Interruption.]* It is paid for, not by Governments, but by the great British taxpayer. The average family now pays £1,500 each year to the National Health Service. Any extra money that goes into private health does not take up beds in the Health Service, but adds to health care in this country.

Q4. **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nelson: When my right hon. Friend shortly meets Mr. Gorbachev, will she reaffirm that the existence of Britain's independent nuclear strategic deterrent is not up for negotiation in any wider talks that may follow on from the intermediate nuclear forces treaty? Does she agree that it is one thing for the United States and the USSR to talk about 50 per cent. reductions in their strategic weaponry, but quite another for us to consider abandoning totally our last remaining nuclear deterrent?

The Prime Minister: We shall keep our independent nuclear deterrent. It is not part of the present negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the point. As I have had occasion to point out in the past, when we modernise our nuclear deterrent with Trident it will be a smaller proportion of Soviet nuclear forces than Polaris was in 1970, and that will be the case even after the 50 per cent. reductions in Soviet nuclear forces.

Q5. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Prime Minister think that it is fair that student nurses should have to pay 37 per cent. of their salaries towards rent before they qualify for housing benefit, and in respect of the poll tax for student nurses, does the Prime Minister consider them to be students or nurses?

The Prime Minister: I replied to that question either at the last Question Time or the Question Time before. However, I shall do so again. Students on grants are treated differently from those who, during their training, receive pay for their work. Nurses come into the latter category, and all who receive pay for their work are treated in the normal way and will make the normal contribution, subject to the normal reliefs, towards paying for local government.

Mr. Mates: Will my right hon. Friend consider today the implications of the extradition legislation that is at present before the Irish Parliament? Is it not in direct conflict with the European convention? Does it not represent a unilateral breaking of an agreement that has existed between our countries since 1965? Does not the application of the prime facie rule to United Kingdom warrants alone make us the least favoured nation in Europe in that regard? What possible justification can there be for the Irish Government, who profess to want better relations with us, taking such action?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Irish Government have taken a decision to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. However, they have unfortunately taken some further steps which we believe could make it much more difficult to secure extradition than in the recent past. We regret that, notwithstanding our representations, the Irish Government are taking additional measures that could make extradition more difficult. It is proposed to give a role to the Irish Attorney-General, whereby he must satisfy himself as to the intention to prosecute the fugitive and as to the sufficiency of the evidence. We are naturally concerned about the compatibility of that with the continuation of the viable extradition arrangements between the two countries.

It is essential that we maintain effective extradition arrangements so that there is no hiding place for terrorists. I agree with my hon. Friend that what the Republic is doing by taking this step is making us the least favoured nation in this matter.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: Is the Prime Minister aware that there is great public concern in Northern Ireland over the fact that the Southern Ireland Government are not now fully committed to the extradition of terrorists for so-called political crimes? Is she also aware the members of that Southern Ireland Government have recently said that they are not happy about legislation which they say is unacceptable, unworkable and unconstitutional? Will the Prime Minister assure the people of Northern Ireland that her Government have not gone soft on the principle of extradition from the Republic, given the war situation that exists in the Province?

The Prime Minister: I hope that I have made it clear that there is a risk that extradition could become more difficult because of the new measures taken by the Irish Republic and that they would be a step backwards from the existing arrangements under which no application is made to a judicial authority for a warrant without there being a firm intention to prosecute based on sufficiency of evidence. Therefore, we are surprised that a need is perceived for any further procedural step.

Girobank

3.31 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need for an immediate announcement of the results of the review by the Department of Trade and Industry about the future status of Girobank."

Yesterday, the Department of Trade and Industry confirmed that Ministers and officials have been investigating privatisation within the Post Office and that Girobank is the simplest and first choice for a sell-off. This is a specific matter because it refers to a Government review of the future of Girobank and concerns proposals to privatise Girobank that have not been presented to the House or been the subject of a statement from any Minister. This matter is urgent because 7,000 staff, working at the Girobank headquarters in my constituency of Bootle, need reassurance about the futue security of their jobs. If another bank was to buy Girobank, there would be no need for that bank to maintain Girobank's clearing bank facilities in Bootle as it would be duplicating its own existing facilities.

We need a statement, and we need to know where we are going. The 7,000 people employed on Merseyside, an area of high unemployment, need reassurance.

This is a specific and urgent matter because it is likely that, if Girobank was privatised, another bank would be the purchaser. Indeed, secret negotiations with other banks have already taken place. At least 7,000 jobs on Merseyside at that clearing bank would disappear. This is a specific matter because, unlike other privatisation proposals, what would be on sale would be Girobank's custom, customers and the 20,000 retail counter outlets in the country's post offices and sub-post offices.

The matter is urgent because plans have already been made by the management, in secret, to facilitate the privatisation proposals. There are proposals for a second centre outside Merseyside. Some three weeks ago the management visited South Africa to recruit middle management and computer staff to work at the Girobank headquarters in Merseyside—an area with 30 per cent. unemployment. That means that ready-made scabs will be brought in when privatisation takes place. This matter is urgent because secret negotiations have been taking place between Girobank management and the Visa organisation to facilitate privatisation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the future of Girobank".

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after the ten minute Bill.

Mr. Heffer: My point of order relates to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has just said.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, I shall take that point of order now.

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a possibility that people in the constituencies of my hon. Friend and myself who are employed in Girobank will suddenly find themselves privatised and out of work. If it is not possible to debate the matter now, can you, Mr. Speaker, explain when something is a matter of priority, and when we can debate it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here for as long as I have; he well knows the criteria under which Standing Order No. 20 debates can be granted. There are many other opportunities for raising matters of that sort, and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is fairly adept at finding them.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During education questions earlier, the Minister of State said, during question 7, that Knowsley borough council had made approaches——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but that is a continuation of Question Time.

Mr. Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the Minister of State said that, it has nothing to do with me. I cannot deal with matters to do with what Ministers may or may not have said. We have a debate today on education in which the hon. Gentleman may well wish to take part. About 60 other hon. Members want to take part in it, too. It is wrong to try to continue Question Time with the Chair on a point of order.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Amendment Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Elimination of Poverty in Old Age Etc.

3.37 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to eliminate poverty in old age.

The Bill is important and timely, because there is much hypocrisy in the House and in society: we pretend to treat old people well at Christmas but ignore them for the rest of the year. The Bill is designed to bring forward a comprehensive series of measures to treat old people in the decent and civilised way that they deserve, rather than leaving them to the poverty and misery in which so many of them are forced to live now.

Last winter was one of unparalleled cold and misery for many old people. More than 200 deaths from hypothermia were registered at the registrar general of births, deaths and marriages. That figure grossly underestimated the real horror of that cold winter, because many old people who died from hypothermia had their deaths ascribed to something else on their death certificates.

We have a duty to listen to the pensioners in the winter and all the year round, to use our positions as Members of Parliament to try to improve the conditions of elderly people, rather than ignoring them, as the House has done for too long. There are approximately 10 million pensioners in this country and the number is increasing. If one believes the figures produced by the Department of Health and Social Security, their average weekly income is about £83, although I find it hard to discover pensioners in my constituency who have that sort of income. More than two-thirds of the average pensioner's income comes from state benefits. For working-class pensioners, 100 per cent. comes from state benefits, because they do not have the cushion of private incomes and expensive private insurance schemes that have been taken out during their working lives.

The whole trend of Government policy has been towards reducing the level of old-age pensions—in real terms—compared with other benefits. Thus, there is the serious problem of elderly people being forced to pay ever-increasing costs, because the retail price index for pensioners goes up faster than for the rest of the community. As a consequence, they suffer poverty. A good example is the change in household expenditure by pensioners. Since 1970, because of an increase in rents, expenditure on housing has gone up by 6 per cent. That has been paid for by old people reducing by 6 per cent. their expenditure on food, with consequent damage to their health. Until 1979, the value of the pension was linked to average earnings.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What does the hon. Gentleman's Bill do?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must not intervene when a ten-minute Bill motion is being moved.

Mr. Corbyn: I have tried five times in the past to introduce Bills about pensioners and have always been met by the most violent sedentary interruptions by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I ask him to be honest with the House for once and to vote against my Bill.

The link between earnings and pensions was broken in 1975. That means that in real terms the value of the old-age pension has declined and is now only 17 per cent. of gross average earnings of male people in work. That percentage is one of the lowest in Europe. Between 1974 and 1979 there was an increase of 20 per cent. in real terms in old-age pensions. Since 1979, they have hardly gone up at all in real terms. If the earnings link had been maintained, single pensioners would now be £9·20 a week better off than they have been since the Tory Government were elected. In western Europe, Britain's pensioners are among the lowest paid. As I have said, the British pension is 17 per cent. of gross average earnings. In France, the pension is over 50 per cent. of average earnings.

In eight simple ways, my Bill seeks to provide a framework for giving pensioners a decent living standard. First, it would fix old-age pensions for couples at half average industrial earnings, and for single people it would be a third. Those figures were put forward by the National Pensioners Convention and were supported and accepted by many hon. Members when they were lobbied by pensioners in the past. If they support those figures, I invite them to support my Bill.

Secondly, my Bill would require central Government to appoint a Minister responsible for the co-ordination of policy on pensioners. Thirdly, it would require local authorities to produce a comprehensive annual report about their policies on pensioners and on the conditions of pensioners in their communities. Fourthly, every health authority would also be asked to do that.

Fifthly, the present anomalous system means that in some parts of the country where there are foresighted Labour local authorities there are concessionary transport schemes—free bus passes. They do not exist in some parts of Britain and the Bill would make them a national responsibility and they would be paid for nationally so that old people would not be forced to go through the present patchwork quilt arrangement. My sixth point is one of the most important. It is about the introduction of a flat-rate winter heating allowance instead of the nonsensical system of waiting for the cold to run from Monday to Sunday, and then if it is sufficiently cold a rebate is paid in arrears. Last winter that resulted in many old people living in homes that were too cold because they could not afford to heat them. If they did get any aid, it was far too late.

My seventh point concerns the abolition of standing charges on gas, electricity and telephones for elderly people. They are paying about £250 million a year towards the profits of the gas industry and those profits will be about £1·5 billion. Standing charges should be cancelled, unit prices maintained and the cost of the standing charge should be taken from the profits of the gas board or the electricity board—if it ends up being privatised. They could well afford to pay for that rather than forcing old people to live in cold and misery throughout the winter. Finally, the Bill would prohibit the cutting off of gas and electricity in any pensioner household.

In short, the Bill would radically change the attitude of our society towards pensioners. It would remove from them the fear of poverty and cold in the winter, and they would at last begin to be treated in the decent, civilised way in which they should be treated. It is up to the House not to wait for the cold of this winter and the deaths from hypothermia, but to act now to redress the poverty in which so many old people live by bringing forward a comprehensive measure to give pensioners the decent, civilised existence for which they have worked, creating wealth for us to enjoy—a life that they deserve.

[Mr. Corbyn]

I very much hope that the House will support the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Tony Benn, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Tony Banks and Ms. Diane Abbott.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN OLD AGE ETC.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to eliminate poverty in old age: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 61.]

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): This is an important point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All points of order are supposed to be important.

Mr. Cryer: One of the important elements of the House, Mr. Speaker, is that hon. Members should be free to speak out. From the Conservative Benches, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has been shouting opposition to the Bill which has just been approved, and a Member of the Government Whips' Office has just sat next to the hon. Gentleman with, I believe, the aim of preventing him from opposing the Bill. That is a clear limitation of the right——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Who sits with whom is not a matter for me.

Later——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may seriously affect his chances of being called in the Second Reading debate if he delays the House. After all, there are about 60 right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in it. If the hon. Gentleman's point of order is relevant to me, I will take it, but, if not, I am afraid he may suffer.

Mr. Lewis: I consider the point of order to be very serious and will take the risk, Mr. Speaker.

During the exchange between my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) when he was presenting his Bill and the Conservative Members who were shouting from a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), at a particularly sensitive part of my hon. Friend's presentation, said that the IRA ought to be brought in to do away with the pensioners to whom my hon. Friend was referring. I believe that that goes beyond the normal cut and thrust of this Chamber and is particularly offensive and ought to be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Fortunately, I do not hear everything that goes on below the Gangway. If the hon. Member for Tatton did say anything of that sort, it would be helpful if he would withdraw it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I thought that it was the sort of point that might appeal to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who was introducing the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of progress——

Mr. Hamilton: In deference to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, if anything I said might have offended the sensibilities of the more sensible Opposition Members, of course I will withdraw it.

Education Reform Bill

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order, of which I have given you notice, about the hybridity of the Education Reform Bill. It arises in respect of clauses 130 to 136, which relate to provisions removing the security of tenure of academic staff.

A hybrid Bill is defined by "Erskine May" as

"a public Bill which affects a particular private interest in a manner different from the private interests of other persons or bodies of the same category or class".

Clauses 130 to 136 contain various provisions for the removal of academic tenure in universities, including the appointment of commissioners to amend the statutes of universities and colleges. If and when the Bill receives the Royal Assent, the provisions will have retrospective force with effect from 20 November 1987, the day on which the Bill was published.

It is clear from the construction of the Bill that the category or class encompassed by the Bill is that of the academic staff of universities and colleges. However, the Bill wholly fails to take into account that, while some universities, by virtue of their statutes, at present have a choice in law as to whether to grant tenure, other institutions — including the university of London in respect of professorships and readerships — have no choice. The law will remain thus until the passage of the Bill.

In the former case, where a choice exists, the university authorities may be able lawfully to take into account the 20 November date set out in the Bill. But where, as in the latter case of the university of London and other universities and colleges, no such choices exist, the university authorities face an insoluble dilemma which will directly affect the private interests of one group of academic staff differently from the interests of others in the same category or class. The university authorities may decide to take note of the provisions of clause 132, and not grant tenure to those appointed after 20 November. In doing so, they would plainly be according quite different treatment to an individual in the same class, entitled to the same rights under the existing statute of the university.

To underline that differential treatment—contrary to the university's legal obligations, which will subsist until the passage of the Bill—if a member of staff was so discriminated against, he would be entitled to take the university to court. The defence that a Bill was before the House would not lie. In those circumstances, there appears to be a clear differentiation in treatment between staff who are appointed before 20 November and staff appointed after that date under the same statutes in force. In those circumstances, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to declare that part of the Bill as hybrid and to refer it to the Examiners.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having given me notice of his submission because it has enabled me to give the matter careful consideration.

The hon. Gentleman asks that I should find the Bill prima facie hybrid because the clauses dealing with academic tenure may result in some academic staff being affected differently from others in the same class. In particular, he submits that if some universities take note of clause 132 and do not grant tenure to anyone appointed after 20 November they will be singling out that individual from the remainder of the class for adverse treatment.

In considering the question of hybridity, I have to look at the terms of the Bill. Provided that the formula or description used in the Bill deals with a category or class which is relevant to the purposes of the Bill and the Bill does not expressly specify or single out an individual or corporation within the category for different treatment, the Bill is not hybrid. The fact that individuals are differently affected when they fall within a general description is not relevant. Indeed, any general legislation will probably affect different people in different degrees.

In the present case, the Bill creates two categories of academic staff: those appointed before 20 November 1987—that is the date of the introduction of the Bill—and those appointed after 20 November. These categories are entirely general and the criteria used are germane to the Bill. The fact that those concerned may be differently affected is not relevant. I must, therefore, rule that the Bill is not prima facie hybrid.

Orders of the Day

Education Reform Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.53 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Raising the quality of education in our schools is the most important task for this Parliament. Both the Prime Minister and I have made that clear. It was a previous Conservative Prime Minister, Disraeli, who said, speaking in this House in 1874:

"Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends."

The House will know that the programme of reform outlined in the Bill is the most far-reaching since the war.

Our education system has operated over the past 40 years on the basis of the framework laid down by Rab Butler's 1944 Act, which in turn built on the Balfour Act of 1902. We need to inject a new vitality into that system. It has become producer-dominated. It has not proved sensitive to the demands for change that have become ever more urgent over the past 10 years. This Bill will create a new framework, which will raise standards, extend choice and produce a better-educated Britain.

The need for reform is now urgent. All the evidence shows this—international comparisons, the reports of Her Majesty's inspectors and, most recently, the depressing findings on adult illiteracy. It must be a matter of regret for all hon. Members, on both sides of the House, to see the figures issued last week which suggested that 5·5 million of our people—13 per cent. of our population—had difficulty in reading and writing. The Manpower Services Commission also reported that 25 per cent. of the long-term unemployed are functionally illiterate. There is no doubt that people who have problems in such simple communication skills are more likely to be unemployed, and, alas, likely to remain unemployed for longer than those who have the skills. This is something that we should not tolerate in our society today.

Lord Callaghan was alive to this more than 10 years ago when, in his Ruskin college speech, he drew attention to the need for change. But the so-called great debate produced no action. There is now a growing realisation that radical change is necessary. The ground has been prepared by the pioneering work of my two predecessors. My noble Friend Lord Carlisle extended the rights of parents with his 1980 Act, and was strongly attacked for doing so. My noble Friend Lord Joseph focused public attention on the central issue of quality and standards. He brought forward the GCSE, and, in the 1986 Act, substantially increased the role of parent governors. The best way of building upon their work is to give more substance and reality to the principle of the 1944 Act that pupils are

"to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents".

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I have listened with care to the Secretary of State's description of his predecessors' records. Will he confirm that Lord Carlisle opposes the idea of opting out and that Lord Joseph opposes the national curriculum, as he did in 1985?

Mr. Baker: I have not heard the views of either of my noble Friends, but I should find it surprising if my noble Friend Lord Carlisle did not wish to extend the rights of parents, as in 1980 he brought to the statute book an Act that substantially increased parents' rights. My noble Friend Lord Joseph has said on many occasions that his ambition and purpose was to raise the basic quality of education. There can be no doubt that, in achieving that, one of our main purposes should be to introduce a national curriculum.

If we are to implement the principle of the 1944 Act that children should

"be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents"

we must give consumers of education a central part in decision making. That means freeing schools and colleges to deliver the standards that parents and employers want. It means encouraging the consumer to expect and demand that all educational bodies do the best job possible. In a word, it means choice.

The purpose of the Bill is to secure delegation and to widen choice. We want to see more decision making in the hands of individual schools and colleges. When governing bodies and heads control their own budgets, decisions will be taken at a local level. Schools and colleges will be free to make their own decisions on spending priorities and to develop in their own way. Grant-maintained schools will give parents and governors a new opportunity, should they wish to take it, to run their schools themselves. Grant-maintained schools and local authority-maintained schools will be subject to less control, not more. They will have more freedom, not less.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall not give way. I generally like to give way, but since about 70 hon. Members wish to speak, it will be in the interests of the House if I give way as little as possible.

Polytechnics and other higher education colleges will be set up as free-standing independent institutions. They, too, will benefit from greater responsibility for managing their own affairs. They, too, will be subject to less control, not more control.

The proposals, taken together, represent a fundamental change in our education system. We set out the Government's policy during the general election. Since the election, the Labour party has sought to repackage its education policies. I am not surprised. So keen is the Labour party to move with the times that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), is now claiming credit for having invented the national curriculum in a memorandum that he wrote for the Labour party in 1973. He was kind enough to send me a copy. It is interesting and, in some places, a fine piece. He speaks first of a core curriculum, and secondly of tests at 7, 11 and 14 years of age. Indeed, he developed that theme, which is so close to his heart, in an article in *The Guardian* in September. He stated:

"There is no doubt that parents want some objective yardsticks against which to measure their children's achievement in education."

I am staggered that such an outstanding contribution to the Labour party's policy was not acted upon from 1974 to 1979. The Labour party did not even take it up in opposition, for the Leader of the Opposition was then the

spokesman for education. Why did he not put forward his colleague's excellent ideas from 1979 to 1983? Clearly he was asleep at the wheel.

Then we have Mr. Neil Fletcher, the Labour leader of the ILEA. He is another strong advocate of change. Indeed, so strong has been support for change along the lines of much of our Bill that Mr. McAvoy, the next general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, has said:

"We can persuade both Neil Fletcher and Jack Straw of the errors of their ways. After all, they are only good men fallen temporarily among Thatcherites."

The Labour party is not alone in claiming credit for the Bill. The Liberal party is now putting it about that it invented financial delegation to head teachers. Well, that is a whopper. But even so, if members of the Liberal party have that illusion, I welcome them on board. Furthermore, the Labour and Liberal parties are now committed to more parental involvement, though they are a bit short on how that will operate.

So I am glad to see the growing consensus for many of the measures in this Bill. The opinion polls also clearly show its popularity with the people who count — the parents. That applies, above all, to the national curriculum, which is the bedrock of our reform proposals.

The first chapter of the Bill is devoted to a national curriculum. I shall quote from clause 1(2) of the Bill. We are proposing a curriculum which

"*(a)* promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and

(b) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

Clause 1 provides the framework and the essential purposes against which the House should measure our proposals.

I want to deal first with the content of the curriculum and with religious education.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, under the Butler Act—the Education Act 1944 — religious education is compulsory. That is still the case, but it is not specifically stated in the curriculum. Will he make a change to clause 1(2)(a) to deal with that?

Mr. Baker: I confirm that religious education in our schools is secured in statute by the Education Act 1944. This Bill reinforces the position of religious education as a compulsory subject. I reassure my hon. Friend and all hon. Members on that point. Clause 6 places a duty on heads, governors and local education authorities to ensure that religious education is provided. That is an advance upon the 1944 Act. In addition, the complaints procedure for parents who are dissatisfied about the delivery of the national curriculum will apply equally to religious education. That, too, is an advance on existing practice.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I shall give way, but I am keen to press on.

Mr. Duffy: While the Minister is on the subject of religious education, given what was said by the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), and given that religious education is required for all county schools and is regarded as an essential aspect of core subjects for Church schools, why is it not given representation on the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council?

Mr. Baker: I have just answered that point. It already has a statutory position. We are now strengthening its position as a subject that must be taught. Of course, it is taught in church schools. Each denomination will teach it in its own way. In respect of county schools, a local conference usually agrees the content that is to be taught. The churches have not asked for it to be a core or foundation subject. Core or foundation subjects will be determined precisely by secular bodies. I have considerably strengthened the position of religious education as a compulsory subject and ensured that it will have to be taught and delivered.

I refer at this point to collective worship. I have accepted the advice of the Churches on this. I want to reiterate that we remain absolutely committed to a daily act of collective worship, but clause 79 ensures that if a school does not want to hold this first thing in the morning but at some other time during the day, it will be allowed to do so. If it wants a different act of worship for fifth formers from that for 11-year-olds, it will be allowed to organise that. This is the flexibility that the Churches have asked for.

After religious education come the three core subjects of English, maths and science, and the seven other foundation subjects—history, geography, technology in all its aspects, a foreign language in secondary schools, music, art and physical education. In Wales, Welsh will have a firm place in the curriculum. Many of the representations that we have had were concerned that the national curriculum could become a straitjacket. That matter was raised at Question Time today. Let me put such fears at rest. We do not intend to lay down, either on the face of the Bill or in any secondary legislation, the percentage of time to be spent on the different subjects. This will provide an essential flexibility, but it is our belief that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for any school to provide the national curriculum in less than 70 per cent. of the time available. The remaining time will allow schools to offer other subjects — among them home economics, Latin, business studies, careers education, and a range of other subjects.

Some teachers are worried that the national curriculum will prescribe how they go about their professional duties. Again, let me put such fears at rest. We want to build upon the professionalism of the teacher in the classroom—the professionalism of the many fine and dedicated teachers throughout our education system. We do not intend to lay down how lessons should be taught, how timetables should be organised, or which textbooks should be used. The national curriculum will provide scope for imaginative approaches developed by our teachers. For example, I am sure all hon. Members have visited primary schools in their own constituencies and have seen the enormous advance in the teaching of science in primary schools. We wish to continue to encourage that.

In many secondary schools, the technical and vocational education initiative created a block of time for cross-curricular activity or project work—for example, how a business is run. The Bill does not stop or stifle worthwhile activities of that sort.

[Mr. Baker]

Another aspect about which concern has been expressed has been our proposals for assessment and testing.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On the matter of the curriculum, are there any implications for university examining bodies? Will children aged between 11 and 16 years have to study certain subjects? Does it mean that the arrangements for GCSE by university examining boards will also be affected in respect of the subjects that can be offered?

Mr. Baker: I do not think that there will be that knock-on effect. We are establishing the framework of a core curriculum and foundation subjects, and expect children to take those subjects to 16. For the first time, we shall require children to take science and technology, for example, to 16. I have visited some comprehensive schools where that already happens and we expect other schools to follow their lead.

The purpose of the national curriculum is to provide a broad-based and relevant curriculum. The education systems in France and Germany do not narrow and specialise as does ours. They remain broad, and that is the thrust of the national curriculum and of the general certificate of secondary education examination. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman's anxieties are well founded.

I was about to speak about assessment and testing. I have set up a task group on assessment and testing which I hope will provide its main report by Christmas. I shall of course publish it. We seek a balanced package of assessment arrangements, including national tests. It has three purposes: first, to tell a parent or teacher what a child knows, is able to do and is able to understand; secondly, to identify problems which need further diagnosis and whether the child needs extra help or more demanding tasks; thirdly, to indicate through the results of assessment the achievements of schools and local education authorities generally. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I know that that last matter is controversial, but the point in all of this is that parents are entitled to know how their child is doing and how their school is doing. A great deal of testing already takes place in primary schools, for if a child's attainment is not assessed at about the age of 7 and the child is allowed to drift, he or she may never catch up again.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: I feel that this must be the last time that I give way.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has acknowledged the importance which many people attach to this matter. Although many people agree that the results achieved by a school ought to be known in toto and that the parents of children ought to know their results, is it intended that the results of individuals should be published?

Mr. Baker: No, definitely not. It is not intended that the results showing a child's performance should be published, although they will remain available to the teacher and to the child's parent. Published results will be on a class or school basis. We do not want the discrimination that publishing individual results could produce.

Some people are concerned that our proposals give too much power to the holder of my office. I understand that concern. It would be constitutionally unacceptable for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to write or alter the national curriculum at his will or whim. The Bill provides a series of checks and balances.

The critical clauses 3 and 4, which empower the Secretary of State to make orders about the substance of the national curriculum — attainment targets, programmes of study and the foundation subjects. Those clauses must be read with clause 11, which provides that, before any orders can be made, the Secretary of State must first put proposals to the National Curriculum Council, which will be under a statutory duty to consult widely. It will then give advice—which will be published—to the Secretary of State. He will bring forward draft orders, which are subject to a further period of statutory consultation, and publish any reasons for departure from the council's advice. At the end of that very open, public process, it will be for both Houses of Parliament to decide.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I feel that I must proceed.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I am sorry, but I must resist the temptation to give way. I have already given way a great deal.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: No.

The Bill also provides for the establishment of a School Examinations and Assessment Council, which will approve syllabuses and qualifications. I intend to set up both the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council in shadow form —subject to the eventual approval of Parliament—so that they can begin the work of developing the substance of the curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Chapter II deals with more open enrolment.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: With respect, I shall not. I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity later to say what he wishes to say.

The proposal in chapter II is a natural extension of our concern to maximise parental choice. There are some 10,000 appeals every year by parents who do not get their preferred school. To judge by a recent Harris poll, many more parents accept with grim resignation what they are offered. According to a survey, nearly one quarter of parents in London and the home counties would like to send their children to another school, and the proportion is even higher for the ILEA area.

I do not claim that all parents will get their first choice of school under our proposals — there can be no question of elastic walls — but I believe that we can remove some unnecessary barriers to parental satisfaction. At present, many schools have to turn away children because their local authority has decided to spread intakes evenly between popular and less popular schools. This means empty desks in popular schools, which cannot be right.

I hope to bring in the new arrangements for secondary schools in 1989, but I shall consult further about this timetable before I take a firm decision. I intend to work with local authorities for the orderly implementation of these provisions.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: This is genuinely the last time that I shall give way.

Mrs. Taylor: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, if parental choice operates as he suggests, it may well lead to all black and all white schools, even within one mile of each other? Is this form of segregation in education something that he wishes to encourage?

Mr. Baker: I do not accept the conclusion that the hon. Lady draws. No school, whether grant maintained, financially delegated or local education authority maintained, is allowed to select children on the basis of colour. To do so would be illegal.

There are about one dozen schools in the United Kingdom where 100 per cent. of the children are drawn from ethnic minority communities, and there are a further 250 where about 75 per cent. of children are drawn from ethnic minorities. That has arisen because of the settlement patterns of immigrants coming to our country. Many schools with 75 per cent. ethnic minority children provide excellent education and many white parents are perfectly content to send their children there. I believe that they will continue to do so. Many parents from ethnic minority communities do not want the conclusion which the hon. Lady fears. I do not believe that it will occur.

The clauses on financial delegation in chapter III will give all larger schools in the next few years responsibility for their own budgets. This has been widely welcomed. It is not surprising because many local authorities have already moved a long way down this road. The Government are responding to a healthy trend by prompting all authorities to follow the pioneers.

We intend that every local authority should develop and make public a fair and rational formula for allocating its resources between all of its primary and secondary schools. That formula will have to be based first and foremost on the number and ages of registered pupils at each school, but account could also be taken of other factors because one school costs more than another to run —for example, because of the incidence of pupils with disadvantaged backgrounds, because schools serve remote rural areas or because of differences between types and sizes of school. The initiative will lie firmly with LEAs.

With delegated budgets, governors will be responsible for the selection and dismissal of staff. These powers are closely modelled on those that the governors of voluntary-aided schools now exercise. The Bill will ensure that the professional advice of the chief education officer and his staff will be available to governing bodies in matters of appointment.

There is a need for training to help governors and head teachers to take on these new responsibilities. The Government will be bringing forward proposals on this. I have agreed this week to make a grant to the National Association of Governors and Managers. By giving governors a responsible job to do, we will encourage more people to come forward.

The Government's objective is to have local authority schemes submitted by September 1989. I intend to consult further on this. I want to ensure that no authority drags its feet and that delegated budgets are general practice by the end of this Parliament.

Chapter IV deals with the establishment of grant-maintained schools. Our proposals will allow all secondary schools, and primary schools with more than 300 pupils, to opt out of local authority control and to apply for direct funding. This will widen choice for many parents in the state-maintained sector for whom all too often the only choice is take it or leave it. This wider choice will help to improve standards in all schools, not just those which opt out. The LEAs will want to hold on to their schools and will, therefore, have a far greater incentive to respond to the wishes of parents. For the first time in 80 years they will face competition in the provision of free education, so standards will rise in all schools as we introduce a competitive spirit into the provision of education—and at no extra cost to the consumer.

Meanwhile, let me stress and make clear that these schools will offer free education. They will be funded at the same level as they would have been had they remained under their local authority. There will continue to be an equality of public resourcing.

When it opts out, a grant-maintained school will retain the character that it had and will continue to admit pupils on the same basis. During an exchange at Question Time this afternoon I made clear that in due course these schools will be able to make an application for a major change of character under the procedures that exist under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980.

Grant-maintained schools will have to agree their admissions arrangements with the Secretary of State and these arrangements will have to be published annually so that parents will know how places will be allocated in the event of over-subscription. Parents who are refused a place for their child can have recourse to a complaints procedure.

The detailed procedures set out in the bill ensure that opting out will be an open, democratic process. If a Church school decides to opt out, I shall give special attention to the views of the trustees and Church authorities. If I approve or the holder of my office approves an application from a Church school, the foundation or trust will continue to own and run the school and to appoint a majority of the governing body. That will preserve the distinctive religious character of Church schools.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way; I have been generous.

The final clause in part I of the Bill enables the Secretary of State to enter into long-term agreements with the bodies that will run city technology colleges. This is another important element in our plans to create an education system that is better geared to the needs of a rapidly changing world. City technology colleges will increase choice for parents, particularly in the inner cities.

Part II of the Bill implements the policies set out in our White Paper, "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge". Our objective is to see more of our young people staying on to get the benefits of further and higher education. When one compares our education system with those in

[Mr. Baker]

other developed countries such as France, Germany or America, one of the striking features is the low staying-on rate at 16 and 18 years. We intend to improve on that, and have set a target for this Parliament of a further 50,000 students in higher education. I suppose that the students who are marching to the House today are marching to demonstrate their support for this commitment.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way any more.

I want to pay tribute to the work that is already in hand to improve the efficiency and quality of our colleges, polytechnics and universities.

The polytechnics and major colleges have come of age, and we propose that they should now become free-standing, statutory corporations, with charitable status. Hon. Members are proud of our polytechnics. They provide a splendid education, and last year there was an increase of over 20 per cent. in the number of first degrees that they gave. Those 48 institutions will transfer automatically from local authority control. Another seven institutions can transfer if their maintaining LEA consents.

In addition, another 24 colleges that are presently funded directly by my Department will join this group. The Bill will increase their autonomy and they, together with the polytechnics, will be funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. I intend to establish the PCFC in shadow form next spring. I shall also be setting up an Education Assets Board in shadow form. It will start work on the complex task of transferring assets to the polytechnics and colleges.

I wish to reaffirm the Government's support for the Church's continuing role in higher education through the voluntary colleges. I intend to ensure that the PCFC establishes a committee to advise it on issues of direct concern to the voluntary colleges.

The Universities Funding Council will replace the University Grants Committee in line with the main recommendation of Lord Croham's review. The UFC will be asked to establish a Welsh committee along similar lines to the one that it has already been decided should be established for Scotland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I must resist the temptation to give way to an experienced parliamentarian.

Another part of the Bill that deals with universities is clauses 130 to 136, which end the arrangements for strict tenure in some universities. Those arrangements severely circumscribe the flexibility and responsiveness of universities. The Bill proposes that all universities should be able to appoint new permanent staff without offering them strict tenure. Independent commissioners will revise university charters to give effect to this and to safeguard academic freedom.

Chapter III of part II deals with colleges remaining with local authorities. Like schools, they will have delegated budgets. Their governing bodies will draw at least half of their members from business, commerce and the local community. This will bring in more business men and women, more industrialists and professionals. They are precisely the sort of people we need to ensure that colleges are responsive to employers' needs. I welcome the statement by the director-general of the CBI, who is looking forward to businesses playing an even greater role in education in the future.

Part III of the Bill will allow inner London boroughs freedom to run their own education services. ILEA has been a uniquely extravagant authority, spending far in excess of comparable inner-city authorities. It has 4 per cent. of the children in England in its schools, yet it accounts for 8 per cent. of LEA expenditure. The tragedy is that the money is not being spent in ways that meet the needs of London's children. For example, ILEA has two and a half times as many administrators per child as the national average. Yet it dares to talk about "economies of scale" when the performance of its schools is often dismal. An HMI survey of science in secondary schools in Greenwich concluded that

"the teaching of science in most of these schools fails . . . to develop the levels of understanding . . . Over 50 per cent. of the lessons had some unsatisfactory features."

Our proposals will give London's children a better deal. The Bill will allow boroughs to apply to opt out from 1 April 1990, or in subsequent years. I shall need to be satisfied that the borough has a full plan covering every aspect of the education service for its area. I emphasise that no borough can opt out of ILEA without specific parliamentary approval.

Recently that matter was put to an electoral test. Ten days ago there was a by-election in Wandsworth in which the opting proposal on ILEA was the main issue. It was made the main issue by the Labour party and by ILEA, and many of ILEA's staff campaigned in that by-election. It was the central issue and we won with an increased majority.

Mr. Straw: If the Secretary of State has such confidence in the opinion of the people of London on the break-up of ILEA, why will he not submit these proposals to a referendum of parents in each borough and to the borough elections in 1990?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should have done better than that. When he was faced with the increased majority of the Conservative candidate in the Southfields ward of the Wandsworth borough council, he immediately said, "It's nothing to do with ILEA; it's all due to Red Ken." The hon. Member for Blackburn cannot blame all the problems of the Labour party on the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). It was a clear issue. It was put to the people and they decided clearly to vote for our proposals.

The proposals which I have outlined to the House today constitute a major change. I would sum up the Bill's 169 pages in three words — standards, freedom and choice. The purpose of all these measures is to improve the quality of education for all our children and to increase opportunities for our children to go on to colleges, polytechnics and universities because a better educated nation is a more prosperous nation.

I have no doubt that the Opposition parties share our wish to improve standards. But what they fail to understand is that one cannot improve standards without at the same time increasing choice and freedom. The people of this country understand that. They showed their understanding at the general election. The Opposition parties went to the country with a prospectus of no change.

They lost that election. The Conservative party went to the country with a programme of radical reform, and we won. I now invite the House to give effect to the people's choice and to give a Second Reading to the Bill.

4.30 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): There is no question more important than the education of the nation's children, but the Bill will severely damage that education. From beginning to end the Bill is based upon a deception. Its very title — "Education Reform Bill" — is a fraud; it should be called the "Education (State Control) Bill". Under the guise of fine phrases like "parental choice" and "decentralisation", the Bill will deny choice and instead centralise power and control over schools, colleges and universities in the hands of the Secretary of State in a manner without parallel in the western world.

Under the guise of arguments for an agreed core curriculum, the Bill will seek to impose a centralised state syllabus. Under the guise of higher standards the Bill will label children as failures at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16, impose selection and segregate children by class and by race.

Outside the House, the Secretary of State has had the audacity to describe his Bill as the most important since the Education Act 1944. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said, to compare the Bill

"with what Rab Butler did would make that great man turn in his grave."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1987; Vol. 118, c. 670.]

Not for Butler a few crude ideas and gimmicks so poorly prepared that two thirds of the way through the election campaign the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State had to make up the policy as they went along. Not for Butler the contempt for those who might have a different point of view or the mockery of a 10-week consultation period. Butler listened for two years; he learned; he gained agreement. Because of that, his Act has stood the test of time. His lasted; the Secretary of State's will not.

The difference is that Butler was a one-nation Tory, a worthy successor to Benjamin Disraeli, whom the Secretary of State quoted. Butler recognised that it was only through equality of opportunity that talents could flower, that richness and diversity in our national life could occur, that individuals could be fulfilled and that one nation could be created. Butler spoke directly of egalitarianism. It is that which the Secretary of State now wishes to destroy. As he told the Tory party conference:

"The pursuit of egalitarianism is over."

The 1944 Education Act laid the foundation for the achievement of equality of opportunity and, yes, of raising the quality of the nation's education. While that Act did not prescribe this, the policy makers at that stage made one fundamental error — they provided for a segregated system by which some were stamped success but by which most were stamped failure. A large part of the purpose of the Bill is to recreate that segregated and divisive system which affected all a child's years from five to 16. Some of us remember what the 11-plus did to children, with bribes of bicycles, of holidays, of parental love and approval if they passed, and the humiliation and shame which families felt when children failed.

It was out of the revulsion and unfairness of the old segregated system that there came the clamour for the comprehensive school. It was far from being an exclusively Labour idea. No Education Secretary before or since can match the record of the Prime Minister for the number of comprehensive schools which were opened or for the number of grammar schools which were closed during her period of office: 1,059 comprehensive schools were opened and 363 grammar schools were closed.

Ever since the right hon. Lady became Prime Minister, that progress has continued. In 1979, 79 per cent. of pupils were in comprehensive schools. At the end of last year, that proportion had risen to over 85 per cent. It is a mark of the extraordinary success of the comprehensive school that in eight years only two Conservative authorities, Solihull and Redbridge, have sought to reintroduce selection, and both failed because of the weight of parental opposition.

Standards too have risen, as even the Department of Education and Science admits. The 1986 school leavers survey for England said of the period 1977-84:

"The quality of school leavers has shown modest but steady improvement."

The most thorough study of all, commissioned and paid for by the Government and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred at Question Time, has confirmed that success. In its report on comprehensives in Scotland, the university of Edinburgh said:

"comprehensive reorganisation, fully implemented, has raised standards of attainment for children of all social backgrounds."

That success has never fitted with the prejudices and fantasies of the Conservative right. So, from the Prime Minister downwards, there has been a constant campaign to instil a sense of distrust of state education and of the competence of the teaching profession. Sometimes the allegations have been pure fabrication. In her Conservative party conference speech on 9 October, the Prime Minister asserted:

"Children who need to be able to express themselves in clear English are being taught political slogans."

Challenged by me by letter to say where this had happened, the Prime Minister has been unable to name a single school—not one—to support that fabrication.

While the Cabinet seeks to denigrate the achievements of our schools, the satisfaction of parents remains high. The Secretary of State quoted opinion polls supporting a core curriculum. Let me quote a *Daily Telegraph* Gallup survey published in early October, which showed that just 18 per cent. of parents were dissatisfied with their children's education, while 76 per cent. were satisfied. There can scarcely be any other service where satisfaction runs at such a high level.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Would it not be more honest for the hon. Gentleman, who knows a great deal about the education service, to admit that, although standards have been rising steadily in this country, there has been a growing gap compared with what many of our competitor countries are achieving, particularly in maths and science? Does not he also accept, when he talks about comprehensive schools, that there is no such thing? Does not he agree that, since comprehensivisation, there has been a growing variety of so-called comprehensive schools in age, range and style? Therefore, there is a pressing case for a national curriculum, as he once used to think.

Mr. Straw: We will discuss the national curriculum later.

[Mr. Straw]

I draw a distinction in the House, as I have done outside, between a core curriculum, which is flexible and based upon a consensus, and an imposed state syllabus. There is no dubiety about this on our part. My position, and the party's position, has always been clear. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) referred to other countries. Let us talk about West Germany. The difference is that in West Germany education between the ages of 16 and 18 is almost universal; it applies to every child. There is not a single provision in this Bill which will encourage children between the ages of 16 and 18 to stay on at school. As for comparisons with testing, as Her Majesty's inspectorate's report makes clear, there is a world of difference between the diagnostic testing in West Germany, which is teacher-based, and the testing which the Secretary of State has in mind.

There was another revealing set of answers in the *Daily Telegraph* Gallup poll. When parents were asked separately who was responsible for the failings in the system, just 7 per cent. blamed local authorities, while almost seven times as many, 47 per cent., blamed central Government.

The Secretary of State had a great chance with this Bill. He could have built upon the satisfaction of parents, the excellence and innovation, the best practice of so many good local education authorities, Conservative and Labour, and the proposals of the parents' associations. He could justly have earned and gained a reputation as a great reforming Secretary of State.

Instead, it is to the Secretary of State's eternal shame that he has brought forth a Bill that will divide; that will set child against child, class against class, parent against parent, school against school, race against race. Yes, contrary to what the Secretary of State said, the proposals will, among other things, lead to educational apartheid —to racially segregated schools. When that was put to the Under-Secretary of State, the Baroness Hooper, her only response was to say that if we ended with a segregated system, "so be it".

What should have been in the Bill? Universal nursery education should have been in it, for a start. I will give a prize of a free copy of Rab Butler's autobiography to any Conservative Member who can tell me who said:

"The value of nursery education"—

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The Prime Minister.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman has got the prize.

"The value of nursery education in promoting the social development of young children has long been acknowledged. In addition we now know that, given sympathetic and skilled supervision, children may also make great educational progress before the age of five . . . Progress of this kind gives any child a sound basis for his subsequent education."

That was what the Prime Minister said in her 1972 White Paper. We agreed with her then in her promise to make nursery education available for all

"without charge . . . to those children of three and four whose parents wish them to benefit from it."

We put that in our manifesto in 1987; the Conservative party left it out.

The Government call this Bill reform, yet in all its 169 pages there is not a single line to give effect to that pledge to universal nursery education. The very children who need nursery education most, and who in Tory areas receive it least, are those who are also not favoured at the other end of the compulsory school system.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): What did the hon. Gentleman and his party do for nursery education between 1974 and 1979?

Mr. Straw: We expanded it. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will see that even under this Government Labour authorities have increased nursery education, while many Conservative authorities have cut it.

Where in the Bill are the arrangements, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West, for making it the norm to provide education as well as training for those between the ages of 16 and 18? Where are the arrangements which recognise the intense financial pressures on many families to get their children to leave school at 16 to take any job that they can? Where are the arrangements for establishing educational opportunities for that one third of the population who never had them —the one third aged over 50 who left school before the Butler Act came into force? They depend on adult and continuing education, yet no sector has been more severely affected by Government cuts than that one.

Ministers must know nothing of the system that they now wish to destroy if they do not know about the immense strides that have been made in many schools to involve parents day by day. Yes, we accept that a good deal more needs to be done. That is why my predecessor as education spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), spelled out months before the Secretary of State even mentioned the word our proposals for raising standards and for the real involvement of all parents; for a guaranteed and agreed common core curriculum; for termly school reports, incorporating clear assessments of effort and performance; for the right to a proper interview with teachers; for clear homework schedules; and for an education ombudsman. There is the widest support for those ideas, but virtually none of them appears in the Bill.

I give just one small example of how skin-deep is the Secretary of State's commitment to parental involvement. For the first time this summer, there were annual parents' and governors' meetings. Some were well attended; most were not. I wrote to the Secretary of State to propose that he should establish, with the local authority associations, a study to identify the best practice of good authorities to see how we could encourage more parents to attend such meetings and to make that study widely available. The Secretary of State refused.

The Bill, in short, is a wasted opportunity, which will waste the opportunities of the nation's young. The Secretary of State's rhetoric this afternoon has been about parental choice and variety, but the Bill is not about parents and pupils, but about power—the Secretary of State's power. The Bill contains 175 new powers in the hands of the Secretary of State; powers which portray

"a frightening degree of secondary legislation and bureaucracy for years ahead";

powers which would

"set the curriculum in stone for twenty years or more".

I quote from the very temple of Right-wing Toryism—the Institute of Economic Affairs.

Nor will our further and higher education institutions escape from the heavy hand. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) will deal in more detail with those proposals when he winds up the debate. Our further education colleges are, as we heard from the Secretary of State, to be handed over to compliant

Conservative business men, and the universities are to be subject to the direct control of the Secretary of State. Academic tenure is to be abolished and no safeguards for academic freedom are written into the Bill.

Behind the massive transfer of central power lies an obsessive vendetta against the rights of local communities and their elected representatives to run their own schools and colleges in the way which suits their own areas best. It is an obsession because, too often, the electors at local polls have either failed to vote Conservative or have voted for the wrong kind of Conservative, such as the chairman of a good Conservative education authority who described the Bill as

"the product of inexperienced zealots."

Had it not been for the determination of local communities to resist the Government, our education service would now be in wreckage. It is a mark of the Government's commitment to education that they have cut what they have been willing to spend on the education of the nation's children by 20 per cent. in real terms in the past eight years. Education spending has risen despite the Government, not because of them. It has risen only because of decisions of local councils rejecting the Government's policies and plans. The Government should hang their head in shame on their education record these past eight years.

Nowhere is the vendetta against local communities more stark, more crude, than in respect of the Inner London education authority. A recent report on local education authority performance puts ILEA among the most cost-effective of education authorities, given its intake. It is no good the Secretary of State complaining about ILEA's expenditure. Three years ago he took central powers to control ILEA's budget and manpower. ILEA's work to improve the quality of secondary, primary and special education and the involvement of parents has been acclaimed across the country. But throughout the past eight years, ILEA has had to do its work against the Government's unremitting hostility. Four times in eight years the Conservative party has sought ways to abolish ILEA, but each time—from the report of Lord Marshall to the decision of the Cabinet only two years ago—they have had to accept that ILEA should remain intact.

The charge of consistency is not one which can easily be laid at the Secretary of State's door. From his passionate support for the continuation of the GLC through to his passionate support for its abolition; from his passionate support for the leadership battle of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to his passionate support for the Thatcherite nonsense in the Bill; from his statements during the election that only a few schools would opt out to his statements now that there is no difference between him and the Prime Minister, no one could ever accuse the Secretary of State of placing principle before the main chance. That even applies to his proposals for ILEA.

Seven years ago, the Secretary of State chaired a committee on the future of London's education. The options were laid out in a report and were numbered one, two and three and six. Option six was to allow individual boroughs to opt out of ILEA—the Secretary of State's very proposal today. Option six was the one then rejected by the Secretary of State, who said:

"Some boroughs may be willing to assume responsibility and ILEA would then become a rump of power-deprived boroughs . . . In addition, since it is unlikely that economy of scale could be achieved in a partial ILEA, there may be an increase in administrative costs."

That is what the Secretary of State said eight years ago.

Perhaps the Secretary of State would now like to tell us why different considerations apply today. I offer him this chance to intervene.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It is because the whole principle of funding of local authorities will be changed from April 1990. We will no longer have the redistributive effect of the special schemes for the Inner London education authority as now, nor the redistribution of the rate support grant in London. What will happen is that, post-1990, each individual London borough, like every other borough and local authority in the country, will receive three grants: the basic grant of the national business rate, the standard rate and the needs grant. That means that the redistribution which is done under the present system will be carried out not under local authority control but by central Government. That makes it possible to allow the London boroughs to opt out. I am quite sure that it will not only be the Conservative boroughs that decide to opt out. Some of the other boroughs may well want to opt out too.

Mr. Straw: I am very grateful to the Secretary of State for that explanation. If only he could have seen the faces behind him as he tried to get himself out of the hole. He did not want to deny that there could still be a rump of poorer, deprived boroughs which under his proposals would receive even fewer resources than they do under the existing financial arrangements.

The Secretary of State's powers of advocacy for his case in favour of opting out are such that he has failed even to persuade his own supporters in Surrey. It is Surrey county council which has said of these proposals that education provision will be

"fragmented in the name of educational choice"

and that

"opting out could well be to the disadvantage of a far greater number of children for whom the authority would remain responsible".

It is Conservatives in the Prime Minister's own Barnet who believe that these proposals will

"end with a system loaded against maintained schools in an indefensibly inequitable manner".

The Bow Group can scarcely be described as being on the wet wing of the party, since its supporters include the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and, in the old days, the Secretary of State for Education and Science. It is the Bow Group which has criticised the "blinkered reasoning" of this Bill and which has called for it to be "shelved".

Variety, initiative and enterprise can only come if different people are allowed to do different things. Rab Butler recognised that when, on Second Reading of his Bill, he said:

"the variety and scope of the provisions must depend on local initiative".—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1944; Vol. 396, c. 209.]

It is that local initiative which the Bill will destroy and, with it, effective parental choice and variety in the provision of education. Opting out will be a fraud. Yes, schools will be able to opt out of locally led education, but they will opt not into independence but into state control of a direct and authoritarian kind. The Secretary of State will have direct control of these schools, including the power to close them. The local authority will have no power, only the duty to pay for them.

[Mr. Straw]

The proposed balloting procedures, under which a simple majority of parents voting can determine the future of a school, will be unbelievably divisive. What a contrast there is here between this casual and slipshod procedure and those that this Government introduced, for example, in respect of the closed shop. Justifying the rule that a closed shop had to be agreed by 80 per cent. of those eligible, or 85 per cent. of those voting, the then Minister for Employment, now the Government Chief Whip, said that the closed shop had to have

"the overwhelming support of the work force"

because of the

"immense importance for individual rights". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 30 March 1982; c. 775.]

But is not a decision about the future funding and character of a school of immense importance to individual rights of parents, children, teachers and the wider community not just today but in the future? What double standards about democracy this Government show.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that the difference between a ballot on the closed shop and a ballot to opt out is that on the first it is to opt into servitude and on the second to opt into freedom?

Mr. Straw: That is just a very silly point. In both cases, the decision of a majority will affect the rights of a minority. In the case of the closed shop, it was considered that the majority had to be so great as almost to encompass the minority; in this case, 51 per cent. of parents voting—fewer even than the majority of total parents—may determine the future of the school for all children. I do not call that democracy.

Open admissions are another part of the fraud of this Bill, one which shows how the introduction of the market will damage opportunity and choice. Yes, a few schools will profit by this change, but many will be damaged and some will become educationally bankrupt, trapped in a vortex of fewer pupils, less money, fewer teachers, less choice, while still having to provide education for those children who remain. What local education authorities have to do, against a background of quixotic changes in the reputation of schools and the roller-coaster of pupil numbers, is to plan so as to ensure, as nearly as possible, that each child is treated as fairly as the next. This Bill will undermine that ability to plan and to be fair, and in doing so will destroy the opportunity and choice of a great many children.

Mr. Barron: In September 1988, my third child will be going along to the local comprehensive school, while each one of the children, along with all those of 12 to 16 years of age in the community where I live, will all have an equal opportunity to go on to further education. Are not this Government and this Bill likely to bring back the days that I myself remember in the 1950s, when at 11 years of age, having failed a test, I was given a second-class education in that community?

Mr. Straw: They will indeed, because, as the Secretary of State has said here, part of the purpose of the Bill is to reintroduce selection and to change comprehensives back into selective schools.

The proposals for so-called financial decentralisation contained in the Bill illustrate another part of its deceit. The Secretary of State has quoted me outside as supporting the idea. I have been right to say that many Labour local education authorities have pioneered sensible financial devolution in education as in other spheres—and so they have, ILEA among them. But the Secretary of State deceives no one but himself if he thinks that at any stage we have supported the proposals in this Bill.

The local education authorities are indissolubly linked with local initiative, with different areas doing things differently. These proposals remove that local initiative and, irony of ironies, the Secretary of State takes clause after clause of central powers to impose his own schemes, regardless of local opinion, to impose per capita funding and to force schools — the teachers, parents and governors—to decide whether they keep a much-needed teacher, buy some books or decorate a classroom. That is not financial devolution, it is a mechanism to force on schools decisions about cuts that the Government have not the guts to make for themselves.

Over all this, there will be the so-called national curriculum. The Secretary of State referred to my views about the national curriculum, and I have supported the idea of a flexible core curriculum rather longer than the Government have. The national curriculum has been one of the Prime Minister's many U-turns—only two years ago she endorsed emphatic rejection of a national curriculum in the White Paper, "Better Schools". Even the Secretary of State did not leak his disagreement at the time. My party called at the general election for a

"flexible but clear core curriculum agreed at national level."

Therein lies the difference. What we seek is flexibility, a framework; what the Government have been prescribing — at least until this afternoon — is some kind of straitjacket. What we seek is a national core curriculum; what we are to get is a state syllabus.

In making the case for a national curriculum, the Secretary of State in his consultative document said that it should apply to all children. But it will not do so. It will apply by law to the children in the state sector of education only. It will not apply by law to fee-paying schools. Will the Secretary of State tell me why this state curriculum should apply by law to the finest comprehensives in the land but not to the worst of the fee-paying schools? Will he tell me why this state curriculum should apply by law to my children but not to his?

At the centre of this straitjacket of the state syllabus are the proposals for testing children at 11, 14, 16 and now, in the words of the Secretary of State, at seven or thereabouts. Just as in the past the Secretary of State has tried to insinuate that parents have no choice in schools, he also insinuates that no testing takes place in schools. In this, he displays considerable ignorance. The first time that he has ever admitted that the daily round of teaching involves the testing and assessment of individual children was in his speech today. I know of no school which does not also use more formal and more regular tests to assess a child's progress. As I have said outside the House, parents have a right to know how their child is getting on against some broadly agreed national picture of how a child should be getting on.

There is a world of difference between testing and assessment to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual children and having the resources to do something about them, and testing which sets child against

child, which tells them only how to compete against their peers and which labels them as successes or failures at age 11, 14, 16 or seven.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

That will be the consequence of publishing class-by-class lists at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16.

The Secretary of State has denied that those tests will be competitive, but they must be because they play a central part in the hidden agenda of the proposals, which will not reform education, but will deform the system to recreate a system based upon selection.

We do not need to muse about where the proposals will lead. We have the words of the proposals' authors, the Hillgate group, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the "no turning back group" of Conservative Back Benchers who want to replace the right to a free education with a giro or a voucher to help pay towards some part of children's education while parents have to pay towards the rest. The proposals for per capita funding, for open admissions and for opting out will take us straight down that road. The authors want an unregulated market in education.

Education, like health, is a public good which, by its nature, is scarce because the demand for it will always exceed supply. It will always be rationed in some way. In the past, that rationing has taken place by need, by a partnership between central Government broadly determining the overall share of national wealth to be accorded it and local communities determining its local allocation. That system of allocation by need is now to be turned on its head. For need, we must read wealth.

The Bill is a fraud, based upon prejudice and ignorance. Virtually the only thing that the Cabinet knows about the state system of education is how to opt out of it. Cabinet Ministers have been doing that for years. As the *Mail on Sunday* reported last week:

"none of Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet sends his children to state schools".

So sensitive are Ministers to that fact, that the *Mail on Sunday* also told us that now all is to change. In case the Secretary of State's Cabinet colleagues are not aware of it, according to the *Mail on Sunday*, the Secretary of State has said that he now expects

"Cabinet Ministers to send their children to the new schools".

At last Cabinet Ministers will opt in, but only to the schools that opt out.

What an inadvertently revealing admission that is. Does the Secretary of State realise the full implications of what he has said — that there has not been one local authority school in the country, not a comprehensive in Surrey, Harrow or Barnet or even a grammar school good enough for the education of Cabinet Ministers' children? Now everything will be OK for the sons and daughters of Cabinet Ministers, as the Secretary of State admitted in an interview and admitted again in the House today that opted-out schools will after all be able to change their character, to select and to become exclusive, and in doing so will be able to keep out the undesirables, the special needs children and those with educational handicap. Indeed, if Baroness Hooper has her way, they will be able to keep out the blacks as well.

For how else could those opted-out schools make themselves suitable for the children of this Cabinet? How else could they make themselves sufficiently different from the existing local authority schools which Ministers so despise? [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame".] If it is a shame, it is a shame on Baroness Hooper. She said that, not the Opposition.

Section 1 of Rab Butler's great Education Act 1944 places a duty on the Secretary of State

"to promote the education of the people of England and Wales . . . and to secure . . . a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area."

That section will not be amended by the Bill. By this Bill, the Secretary of State will fail in his duty under the 1944 Act in every particular.

The Secretary of State bears a great responsibility on his shoulders for the education of this nation's children, for the provision of equality of opportunity, for ensuring that every child can reach his potential, for securing a skilled and articulate citizenry in the interests of both our economy and our democracy. By his speech this afternoon and by this Bill, the Secretary of State has shown that he is incapable and unwilling to measure up to those responsibilities. In place of Rab Butler's one nation, the Bill will create two nations in education. The only consensus or agreement that the Bill has achieved is the consensus against it from the Churches, Conservative councillors, governors, teachers and above all from parents and the children so precious to them. Yes, every parent wants a system that will better their child's chances, but they will not get that with this Bill.

The Bill will damage educational standards. It will level down, not up. It will reduce opportunity, choice and variety for the majority of our children, and it will undermine local democracy. It will make the Secretary of State the commissar of educational control throughout the breadth of the country. We shall fight the Bill in the House and in the country and we shall vote against it in the Lobby tonight.

5.4 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): This is a massive Bill of immense importance both to the future of today's children and the future of this country, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science explained when he began his speech by quoting Disraeli and his one-nation philosophy. Disraeli was followed by Balfour and Butler in creating our educational system. Throughout they were motivated by the doctrine of one nation. I very much hoped that my right hon. Friend would continue that philosophy in the changes that he wants to make in bringing the education system up to date. However, the procedures that have been followed in bringing the Bill before the House do not encourage one in that belief.

Mr. Marlow: There was an election.

Mr. Heath: My hon. Friend says that there was an election, and indeed there was, but whatever doctrine on the mandate that one likes to hold—and they are many and varied — that does not justify any Government failing to provide a proper opportunity for Parliament and in particular the House of Commons to discuss Bills. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in my hon. Friends chanting in that manner and grinning about it. This is a serious matter. Mr. Speaker has announced that 70 hon. Members want to speak in the debate and there is less than four hours in which they can do that. That cannot be

[Mr. Heath]

anything other than a caricature of parliamentary government. My hon. Friends should be ashamed. If their constituents hear about this, they will tell them so. Because the Opposition are incompetent, ill-led, ineffective and unable to get an extra day's debate out of the Government, that is no reason why hon. Members on the Government side should be limited in time. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in the Leader of the Opposition laughing about this. It is a tribute to his ineffectiveness that he cannot get an extra day. His predecessors would have been ashamed of themselves for putting the Labour party in a position in which they could not debate the Bill properly.

There has been inadequate consultation over the summer and the Bill was published only seven working days ago. Organisations, especially the universities, have written to hon. Members to say that they are incapable of providing criticism of the Bill because there has not been time to consider or discuss it. That shows a lamentable respect for education and, I regret to say, for Parliament. Moreover, that allows another place every opportunity to say that the major issues were not fully debated in the House of Commons and therefore the Lords can take the matter in hand. Indeed, those who have discussed it on television have already taken that view. That is lamentable.

The background to the Education Act 1944 has been mentioned. I want to emphasise a point in relation to what will happen under the Bill. Rab Butler and Chuter Ede created a triumvirate for parity of esteem — grammar schools, technical schools and secondary moderns. That enabled clever technicians to go to a good technical school as well as those who were less able. The clever academics could go to a good grammar school and those who were clever at general things could go to a secondary modern school. The point was that in each type of school pupils with considerable mental ability attended beside those who were not thus gifted.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heath: No, there is no time for interventions.

The point was that the clever and the less clever would be together in the same school and one would lead the other. The danger is that under the new system the clever will go to one school, leaving the other schools with the less clever.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *indicated dissent*

Mr. Heath: I know that my right hon. Friend denies that, but he is wrong. The fact is that so much of a school, whether academic or sporting, depends on the leadership of those who are best at those pastimes. If the better children leave one school for another, which is what will happen under his system, that will be to the detriment of the children as a whole. That is the connection between the change from the Butler system and what will happen under this system.

The Butler system was changed because, in the years after the war, the Labour Government did not have the resources to give the technical schools and secondary modern schools the ability to reach parity of esteem with grammar schools. That led to the pressure for comprehensive schools and is why they developed during the 1960s and 1970s. They did away with the idea that children were going to a school of a higher status than other schools.

The important question is what is required in education today and what is necessary to achieve it. I am sick to death of education in this country being knocked in the way that it is, largely for political purposes, and of teachers being constantly hammered. The great majority of our teachers are good and devoted people as I have found in my constituency and my home area. However, they are now completely demoralised because of the treatment that they have received.

The inspectorate of the Education Department is also demoralised because no notice is taken of what it says. On its inquiries into ILEA, has not the inspectorate said that it should continue? However, its view has been ignored. The morale of the inspectorate is low, as is that of the headmasters who find that their views are not even solicited. Indeed, they will now be laboured with the financial control of schools. Anybody would think that they wanted that, but they do not.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No, I shall not give way because there is not sufficient time.

Anybody would think that headmasters were begging for the opportunity to run the finances of their schools. However, they are not, not for one moment.

Mr. Howarth *rose——*

Mr. Heath: No, I shall not give way. I have not got the time to give way. If my right hon. Friend had given us two days for the debate, we could have had proper exchanges.

Neither are the governors asking for the power to run the finances of schools. The great majority of education authorities run their financial arrangements satisfactorily. That raises another point about ILEA. If the rich boroughs opt out, undoubtedly the poorer boroughs will suffer. There cannot be any alternative. Why should the poorer areas of inner London suffer because the richer ones can opt out? That is against the entire trend of Conservative education policy over much of this century.

Where there are poor and inadequate teachers, we must find a way to improve them. That means improving the qualifications of teachers on entry into the profession. That is what needs to be tackled. If it is necessary to have assessment of teachers later in life, we should do so, but that does not need the complete reconstruction of the entire educational system.

I shall deal now with some specific points in the Bill.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No, I am enjoying myself too much to give way.

There has long been an argument for having a national curriculum, but it must be flexible. The Secretary of State has moved in that direction, but he still has the power to dictate the national curriculum down to individual books. My right hon. Friend may smile, but one day, whether we like it not, a Labour Member may be in my right hon. Friend's place. Will he enjoy this situation so much then, when a Labour Minister inherits all the powers that the Secretary of State is taking unto himself? The Secretary of State has taken more powers under the Bill than any other

member of the Cabinet — more than my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of State for Social Services. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is taking more direct power and that is why the universities are terrified. We all know what happens today to people who hold differing views from those held in Government circles. Academics can see quite clearly what will happen to them if they express their real views.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heath: My hon. Friend may shake his head. He is connected with the universities and knows full well why academics have not spoken out about what is required of the universities. They are afraid that they will lose their jobs.

The success of the national curriculum attainment tests will depend on how they are carried out. If they result in children being told that they are a pass or a fail they will be disastrous. If a child of seven has to go around with a "fail" tag on him for the rest of his life, the damage will be enormous. The Secretary of State must show the teaching profession and parents that his attainment tests will not lead to such judgments. Although many of my hon. Friends would like to see things go that way, I think that it would be fatal.

Parental choice in the Bill is largely a confidence trick. I say that quite openly. My right hon. Friend has quoted public opinion polls. About 93 per cent. of parents stated in a Gallup poll that they always got the school of their choice. What happens to the other 7 per cent. if the school of their first choice is full?

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): They are not physically full.

Mr. Heath: In my constituency they are physically full.

Mr. McLoughlin: They are not physically full in mine.

Mr. Heath: Many schools are physically full.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: If my right hon. Friend comes to my constituency, I shall show him some that are not.

Mr. Heath: I turn now to the schools of my hon. Friends behind me. Why are they evened out? The Secretary of State knows full well that that happens for economic purposes to enable the local educational authority to run schools in which there are insufficient children and to fill all the schools. The schools are balanced out.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: For bureaucratic purposes.

Mr. Heath: That is the biased view of my hon. Friend. However, that happens for economic reasons. We shall reach the stage at which it is possible to fill one school and close down another because that will be the inevitable consequence.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. Friend give way just once?

Mr. Heath: No, I shall not give way.

Obviously, a school cannot be closed down immediately, but the time will come when it must be closed down. The majority of complaints in my constituency are not about teachers or the local education authority but about the closures of good schools simply because the numbers have fallen, but that is inevitable.

When my right hon. Friend says that the Bill will give parents greater choice, it can only give them greater choice if a school opts out, and, having opted out, changes the pupils whom it takes in. That is the only way in which there can be greater choice than they have at the moment, because there cannot be greater choice at the moment because the facilities are not there.

That is why the voucher attempt was abandoned. It was quite obvious that the local education authority could not say to parents, "Yes, of course, you can have the school of your choice because we shall enlarge it and take them all." That was nonsense. Parental choice is in grave danger of turning out to be a confidence trick. Parents will not find that their choice has been increased. Indeed, 93 per cent. of them say that they get the school of their choice as it is. Very well then, there is no argument for opting out.

Let us now consider the question of parent power. It is completely unrealistic. Again, the great majority of parents do not want to run the schools to which their children will be sent.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: We have already heard that only 8 per cent. of parents attend the meetings——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend give way? He cannot be so undemocratic.

Mr. Heath: If the hon. Lady had been democratic enough to force the Leader of the House to give us two days for this debate I would happily give way. *[Laughter.]* Parent power——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose——*

Mr. Heath: Parent power is just a political slogan. It has no real meaning for today's educational system.

I wish to deal with the vital question of opting out, because it destroys the system that was built up by Disraeli, Balfour and Butler. One of my hon. Friends on the Benches behind me said in an intervention that opting out represents the choice between freedom and not opting out. That implies that to remain in a local education authority is a form of tyranny. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] Well, there it is. That reveals the real attitude of some of my hon. Friends behind me.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Look at Brent,.

Mr. Heath: I hear the cry, "Look at Brent" and that gets us to the point. We are going through the whole of this process because of the madness of Brent, Haringey and two or three others out of more than 100 education authorities. That is what it is all about. What will happen as a consequence? We shall see that schools will opt out. The next development will be that those schools can choose whom they take. They will not take from their areas, but will take the bright pupils wherever they find them. The next stage will be, "Yes, you can charge fees for doing that." We will move right away from our educational system to a fee-paying system of independent schools of choice.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heath: Well, the Secretary of State may shake his head, but he knows perfectly well that that is the

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philosophy behind the whole process. It is immensely damaging to the educational system of this country. It will be divisive and it will be fatal to the education of a large number of our children.

Mr. Marlow: This is a mischievous speech intended to be damaging to the Government.

Mr. Heath: When the Bill is in Committee, I ask my right hon. Friend to consider very seriously the large number of points that will be raised because they are serious.

The extent of the Secretary of State's power will be overwhelming. Within the parliamentary system, no Secretary of State should ever be allowed to hold such a degree of power. He should surrender that power. There is no confidence in the claim that all the processes of consultation that the Secretary of State has mentioned will be effective or that the Secretary of State will take any notice of them.

Opting out should be dropped completely. It will undermine the whole of the basic educational system of this country. The proposition of dictating to the universities what they should do, how they should do it and what will happen to their staff must also go.

There is so much to be done and the Secretary of State could create a record for himself akin to that of Balfour and Butler. He will not do it this way. I beg my right hon. Friend to look at his predecessors and follow the line, both practical and philosophical, taken by them.

5.23 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I should like to congratulate the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) on his extremely penetrating speech. It was not received with universal welcome on the Conservative Benches, but it was extremely welcome to the Opposition and indeed to the country as a whole, because he was speaking up for the education system.

I should also like to congratulate my successor, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), on his very fine speech. He is doing an excellent job not only for the Labour party, but for all those parents who are deeply concerned about what is happening to education under this Government.

The Secretary of State often compares his Bill, in a self-congratulatory manner, to the Education Act 1944. Let us make that comparison. In 1944 there was a national consensus about what was needed to be done in education. There was a generally held view that educational opportunities needed to be widened. There had been authoritative official reports that illustrated both the need and the way ahead. R. A. Butler, ably supported by his Labour understudy, Chuter Ede, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has reminded us, was able to build on those reports and on the national consensus to provide secondary education for all. That was the background to the 1944 Act.

Certainly, in 1987, there is a widely shared view that educational standards need to be raised. Eleven years ago, the Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in his famous Ruskin speech, expressed his concern that pupils were leaving school without a proper grounding in literacy and numeracy. He therefore called for a debate on education and especially whether—as he believed—there was a need for a core or national curriculum. So much for the charge that Labour has jumped on the curriculum bandwagon. We started it rolling.

A glance at the Department of Education and Science background papers for the 1977 regional education conferences illustrate the themes that we are still discussing in 1987. The headings ran:

"The school curriculum from 5 to 16."
"The assessment of standards."
"The education and training of teachers."
"School and working life."

Before the election, when I was chief education spokesman for the Labour party, I always made clear my party's commitment to raising standards. For example, I welcomed the Sheffield speech of Sir Keith Joseph, the then Secretary of State for Education. I said that we would give him our full support.

In 1985, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I launched a policy statement called "A charter for pupils and parents". That spelled out our plans for raising standards. In September 1986 I published a Fabian pamphlet entitled "Equality and Quality". That argued the case for a common core curriculum—yes, before the Government did—improved teacher performance and closer home-school links; that is extremely important for raising educational standards. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn has also pointed out that, in February 1987, I published a charter for parents' rights to underwrite good quality education for all.

On a number of occasions my successor, the hon. Member for Blackburn, has eloquently stressed our commitment and his commitment to quality, standards and performance in education. He is absolutely right. Of course it is true that, over the past decade, educational standards have risen significantly at all levels. So much for those who knock comprehensives and, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup rightly said, so much for those who knock teachers. In evidence I quote DES statistics on examination results for the past decade.

However, from a number of studies we are aware that many children are not fulfilling their full potential at school. We know that, in similar areas with similar levels of funding, some schools are performing considerably better than others. As a result of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research's report findings, we are aware that pupils in other countries are achieving higher standards, especially in mathematics, than pupils in this country. So, if we are to survive and prosper in the 21st century, the raising of educational standards for all must be a top national priority. We can all agree about that.

We can all also agree—at any rate most of us can—on the case for a national core curriculum. If the Bill contained only clauses on the curriculum, we would welcome it. Of course there would be arguments about what should be in it, about flexibility and about how it was to be controlled. In this context, as in that of higher education, the Secretary of State has revealed himself in his true colours—as a centraliser and an authoritarian.

But sadly, unlike the 1944 Act, the Bill also contains highly controversial proposals that have been almost universally rejected. The Secretary of State cannot claim a mandate for the opt-out proposals. He knows perfectly well that the main reason why the Tories ran behind us on education during the election was those proposals. He knows that all the public opinion polls show that there is no majority support for opt-out proposals.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Gentleman referred to public support, and he was right. The opinion poll published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 7 October showed that no fewer than 66 per cent. of parents opposed the opt-out proposals.

Mr. Radice: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for getting the figures precisely right. I am also grateful for his help during the general election, when we pinned down the Secretary of State on the opt-out proposals and showed that he made them up as he went along.

Despite the Secretary of State's fine words, and in contrast to the 1944 Act, the Government are not proceeding on the basis of consensus, particularly on the opt-out proposals. The Government do not believe in real consultation, or they would have taken the consultation process and what people said to them seriously. They have not done that, and they have not been concerned to take people with them. They are trying to get this controversial piece of legislation through in the first session of Parliament as quickly as they can. That is their legislative strategy.

The political strategy behind the opt-out proposals was mapped out clearly in an interview with the Prime Minister in *The Independent* on 14 September. She clearly hopes that the opt-out proposals will appeal to voters in the same way as the sale of council houses did in her first and second terms. To put it in her language, she wants to create a society in which

"those who want to get out of the socialist queue approach should be able to do it".

Clearly the Prime Minister has never liked the idea that everyone should have a fair turn, because she is so used to barging her way through to the front.

She believes that most schools will opt out:

"It is meant to be as big a revolution as the one million transfer from the public sector into owner-occupation".

But if most schools—or a large minority of them—opt out, there will be a two-tier state school system, with the opt-out schools as the elite establishments and the remaining schools as the inferior, sink schools. Inevitably, there will also be a return to selection, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup pointed out.

To give her her due, the Prime Minister accepts that. She positively revels in the idea of a return to selection. To her, the golden days were those of grammar schools and the 11-plus. She always forgets about the other schools—the secondary moderns—to which those who failed the 11-plus went. She forgets the heartache, the division and the sheer waste of talent which report after report to this Parliament revealed. She forgets that what this nation needs is not only an education system that prepares the elite but one that provides a good education for the whole nation. That is what we should be aiming for.

What does the Secretary of State think? Of course, he is influenced by the Prime Minister and the Conservative Right. I do not blame him: he is an ambitious politician. I want to give the Secretary of State the benefit of the doubt, and at least give him credit for political acumen. He is far more aware of the dangers of a mass exodus from the local authority system than is his leader. That is why there were those differences of opinion during the general election.

I remember that a radio programme that I shared with him was delayed for half an hour while the Secretary of State communicated with the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who relayed to him what the Prime Minister had said during her press conference. The Secretary of State grew paler and paler as he spoke to the right hon. Member for Chingford on the telephone. It was very embarrassing for the Secretary of State, and I felt extremely sorry for him.

The right hon. Gentleman continues to play down the opt-out proposals. It is significant, for example, that the opt-out proposals barely got a mention in the Tory party political broadcast last week. We heard about the national curriculum and about testing, but not about opt-out. The Secretary of State presents it as a safety valve, a check on the performance of local education authorities and a legitimate extension of choice. If that were all there was to it, perhaps we could dismiss the proposals as irrelevant. My fear is that they are likely to be used in a way that will be highly destructive to the education system and harmful to our main goal—raising educational standards for all.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): Does the hon. Gentleman know whether the proportion of places in universities that is given to blue-collar workers' children today as compared with 1926 is more, less or about the same?

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman said that there had been a rise in standards over the past decade. Has he done his research to establish how largely the independent schools have contributed to that rise in standards in terms of examination results?

Mr. Radice: I am talking about exam results from state schools, and it is clear that the proportion of children achieving examination success at all levels has increased. The Secretary of State's predecessor used to admit that freely to me, so I am surprised that the Minister has raised the point.

As to universities, I should have thought that the Minister, who went to a polytechnic himself, would have remembered that the polytechnics have been invented. Taking polytechnics and universities together, a higher proportion of working class children go into higher education now than at the date to which he referred.

I return to the opt-out proposals. I want to consider the schools that are likely to be prime candidates for opt-out. First, there are the schools that are told by local education authorities that they will have to close because of falling rolls. The Audit Commission has already warned the Secretary of State that the proposals for open enrolment, combined with the opt-out proposals, will seriously slow down the process of school rationalisation and add to costs. We have heard nothing about that from the Secretary of State, so it is likely that less popular—perhaps even less good—schools will be able to survive through opt-out.

Then there are the grammar schools. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn pointed out, everyone knows that the Prime Minister, when Secretary of State for Education and Science, was the champion closer of grammar schools—and for good reason. Some were too small, or were no longer providing an effective or broad enough education. When the right hon. Lady was Secretary of State, most education authorities were Conservative-controlled, and when they applied to close grammar schools, she agreed and gave them the go-ahead. Under opt-out, the grammar schools will have an escape route.

[Mr. Radice]

Then, there are the secondary schools that are confronted with the tertiary scheme. The Secretary of State has made it clear that, at a time of falling rolls, a tertiary system is the best means of maintaining the curriculum and raising standards. I agree. Now, however, a school that is faced with the closure of its sixth form will immediately agitate for opt-out. So the opt-out proposals are likely to mean delay, muddle, uncertainty and extra cost. They will certainly not widen choice in any meaningful sense, or assist in the introduction of a national curriculum, or help to raise standards across the board.

A less controversial Bill without the opt-out proposals, one that concentrated, as it should, on raising standards, could well have performed the same constructive role and function in the 1990s as the Butler Bill performed for the future over 40 years ago. The result of this Bill is likely to be very different. We are likely to get parents divided against parents, parents divided against teachers and parents and teachers divided against governing bodies. Most important, children will once again be divided into sheep and goats. A great opportunity to raise standards across the board, with the wholehearted co-operation of parents, teachers and local education authorities, will have been thrown away. Under this Government, Britain will once again have missed the education boat.

5.40 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this popular debate to make my maiden speech on one of the most significant education Bills that we have seen this century. In my opinion and in the opinion of many parents, it is long overdue. I come to the House as a proud ambassador for the west midlands in general and for Wolverhampton, North-East in particular. I am the first Conservative Member in 40 years to represent the interests of Wolverhampton, North-East and I feel highly honoured. I pay tribute to my constituents for the faith that they have put in me.

I cannot claim to be the first female Member for the constituency. My predecessor, Mrs. Renée Short, dedicated herself to the interests of the constituency since 1964. It is a reflection of the high regard in which I know she is held in the House that Members of all parties speak of her with warmth and affection and with special reference to her position as Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Services since 1980. She was Chairman of that Committee and of its predecessor Committee for the past 21 years.

My constituency is ideally located in the heart of England. It is at the centre of the motorway network system and the M54 connects my constituency to the rest of the world. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that our superb location is a powerful magnet that has attracted some of the world's leading industrialists. We have such leading companies in the aerospace industry as Lucas, Dowty and Marston Palmer—to name but a few—and one of the world's leading tyre manufacturers, Goodyear, which offers local employment to 4,000 people.

It gives me great pleasure to report to the House that the scars of the recession in the traditional black country industrial heartland of the United Kingdom are fading. We are on to a winning combination, with unemployment coming down and the Wolves football team going up. Eight years ago we had empty order books and redundancies, but now both small and large companies report a healthy optimism based on full order books and the creation of new jobs. The problem to which we now have to address ourselves is one of skill shortages to fill the vacancies.

I cannot think of a more appropriate location than Wolverhampton for one of the first of a pilot network of 20 city technology colleges that are proposed in the Bill. I am delighted that Wolverhampton has been selected for one of those colleges. That college will attract 11 to 18-year-old boys and girls of all abilities and will foster in them a pro-industrial culture specialising in science and technology. It will equip them with the very skills that will take us into the 21st century. The college will bring education and industry much closer; for too long they have worked in isolation.

We have a duty to match our pupils to the jobs that are available and to recognise where the demand is greatest. We must encourage more pupils to stay on at school after the age of 16 and, above all, we have a duty to reduce the possibility of unemployment for all our school leavers. The future prosperity of my region depends on our ability to compete with the rest of the world. The ultimate success of people in the workplace depends on the foundations that are laid for them in our schools in the most formative 11 years between the ages of five and 16. Casualties of our system are too easily identified among the ranks of the long-term unemployed for whom we are now offering numeracy and literacy courses in our community programme that will help them into work.

It is precisely because we have so many horrific instances of foundations not being laid and that fact not being spotted until children are 16, by which time it is too late, that I welcome the Government's guts and determination to get to the grass roots of our education system and to provide a much needed framework. In the Bill we are addressing ourselves to the realistic problems that have been worrying parents for years. How can we stand back and justify the continuation of a system in which only one in eight of our fifth formers are currently studying the core subjects of science, English, mathematics and technology?

I do not support the Bill's proposals—good as they are — out of some innocent loyalty to my party. I support them because I cannot think of another time in my life when a Bill more clearly reflected the direction in which I want to see our schools progress. In my lifetime I want to see a school system that is tailormade, not for the top 27 per cent. who will leave with five O-levels-plus, but for the needs of 100 per cent. of our pupils. Under that system, private education should never need to be a choice.

I want an education for all our children whatever their colour or creed, wherever they live, whatever their ability and no matter what the location of the school. I would not want it on my conscience as I was about to retire in the year 2016 to read, as I did last week, that a Government adult literacy and basic skills unit survey of all the children born in one week during 1958 and who are now aged 29, showed that not only could 300,000 of them not read or write, but that one quarter of the 6 million surveyed had problems with reading, writing, spelling and simple arithmetic and that that had never been identified in the

11 years between the ages of five and 16. The survey also showed that they had received no specialist help. That is a disgrace.

We have to give parents the guarantee that, when their children leave school, irrespective of the number of passes they may or may not have, each child has fulfilled his or her full academic potential and has developed the necessary social graces and moral values to enable the children to integrate well into the community in which they will live as adults.

I have no doubt that my aspirations for our education system may well have been influenced by my private sector experience of management with a leading high street retail company. That company is so easily identified by its success that it does not need me to advertise it in the House. It can boast of stores located throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom. As any of its customers know, whatever the location of the store—whether north or south, inner city or market town—when the customer goes in he is guaranteed a choice of quality goods served by well-trained staff in a disciplined environment under the supervision of strong management. Why should not parents, who in great part pay for state education, be guaranteed the same in our schools, irrespective of location? They should have the choice of quality education, provided by well-trained teachers in a happy, disciplined environment, under the strong supervision of a capable head.

It would be wrong for us as a Government not to recognise, as I do, that much of the ultimate success of our proposals when they are implemented will depend on the strength of leadership in our schools. We must pay more attention in future to assessing would-be head teachers for their management potential, and training them in the relevant management skills. To assume that a first-class teacher has the makings of a good head is like assuming that a first-rate surgeon would make a good hospital administrator.

Our success depends on restoring professionalism to teaching to attract and retain high calibre teachers, initially selected and trained to high standards, and subsequently retrained and assessed throughout their teaching career, to ensure that they are constantly adapting to the ever-changing demands of the modern world in which we live. For the sake of our children, we cannot tolerate circumstances in which teachers are seen to have a job for life, irrespective of their suitability for teaching jobs. That is not fair on the good teachers who have to prop up their less capable colleagues. A recent HMI survey showed that one third of teachers assessed were not considered adequate, and we must address ourselves to the problem.

I speak with strength of feeling on the need for reform, not out of some uninformed whim but as one who had many opportunities for close observation years ago, as a secondary teacher in the inner cities and the country; in management, as an assistant education officer; as a school governor in junior and secondary schools; as a councillor; but, most of all, as a mother. For too long, parents and schools have been working in isolation when there should be a continuing partnership throughout a child's school life. That may well account for so many parents' lack of responsibility for their children's actions.

Too often, parents have been denied a choice of school. They have not known what their children are learning, and are unable to assess how well they are doing. How often have hon. Members in the Chamber today been asked, "How is your child doing at school?", and been unable to give an honest and informed answer? A few minutes reassurance on occasional open evenings is a poor substitute for assessment tests, which we are now proposing for children at the ages of seven, 11 and 14, to determine their strengths and weaknesses.

To recognise the successes in our school system but to ignore the failings, and to take no action for fear of change, would be to abdicate our responsibility as a Government. By addressing ourselves to the task of raising standards and increasing parental choice, I hope that we can bring about a knock-on effect on the social problems so prevalent in our education system. How can we genuinely defend the present position, in which truancy is increasing, discipline is worsening and violent attacks on teachers are commonplace?

Too often, problems of boredom and apathy among teenage pupils reflect a low expectation of their achievement, and an inability to cope with the basic skills in their earlier education. If it is radical to want to reduce the incidence of such problems—as I do—to want to offer all our children the opportunity of a better education, and to want to set our head teachers, governors and parents free from the constraints of local authority bureaucracy if they so wish, I make no apologies for being radical. Only short-sighted minority vested-interest groups would want to stand in the way of what I interpret as the true meaning of the word "progress". If to look for higher expectations among all our pupils labels me one of the new authoritarians, I must tell the House that many parents out there share my sentiments and demand change.

I was trained as a teacher in the so-called "progressive" sixties, and I remember them only too well. However, I have never succumbed to the "progressive" doctrine in which authority is frowned on, competition is a dirty word and even "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"—my son's favourite book—is considered racist. Opposition Members might have us believe that they have a monopoly interest in state education. However, I believe that it is precisely because I received the best state education going in a secondary school that I had the motivation to earn myself a place in this House today. That reinforces my determination that our children should be given the same opportunity.

5.56 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The House will have listened to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) with interest. I congratulate her on her maiden speech. As she rightly said, she has been a teacher and has also been on a board of governors, and it would be wrong for me to say that I feel only depression that she has concluded that schools can be run in the same way, and are the same in all other respects, as Marks and Spencer. I hope that she will be disabused of that notion. Nevertheless, her speech was well delivered and concisely expressed. I am sure that it will be read widely in her constituency, and will be of some interest to the House as well.

Choice, improved standards and the removal of politics from education are the three aims of the Bill as stated by the Secretary of State, and they are aims with which we entirely agree. Governments, however—particularly the present Government—should not be judged by their rhetoric. The question before us now is whether the Bill

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will achieve those aims. The resounding answer, as expressed by the thousands of responses to the consultation paper, is no. While there is no doubt that the Bill will provide choice for some, for many it will provide only a new form of entrapment.

What choice will there be for the poorer family who have no transport and must send their children to the local sink school, whence all the middle-class have fled to the so-called better school over the hill? What choice will there be for pupils whose individual ability cannot be met, because the studies that they wish to follow are not included in the Secretary of State's imposed state curriculum? What choice will there be for local communities who wish to establish a tertiary college but are unable to do so because the opting-out proposals prevent any sensible rearrangement of education in their area? What choice will there be for the handicapped child whose special educational needs merit only four miserable lines in this monstrous Bill, when local education authorities will be prevented by the opting-out proposals from integrating those special needs into education? The claim that the Bill will provide more choice for all is fraudulent and bogus.

The Government's second claim is that the Bill will raise standards. Some of its proposals many assist in that direction. However, standards in our schools can never be properly raised unless we are prepared to put more of our national resources into education. One in three of our schools is in need of substantial repair, one in four of the roofs leak, one in five schools has outside lavatories and far too many are vastly overcrowded—all matters which Her Majesty's inspectorate has said were having a damaging impact on education.

Purely institutional changes and changes to the mechanisms by which we run our schools will not achieve raised standards unless we can find the political will to put more resources into education. The Government have absolutely no intention of doing that. They will keep the percentage of our national resource that is invested in education as low as it has always been since they came to power.

Mr. Baldry *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I must make it clear that for reasons of time it will have to be the last time I give way.

Mr. Baldry: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman read the 1986 annual report of the inspectors. It said that better teaching, better training and better management of resources were needed to raise standards rather than more resources. Simply to treat every problem as if it requires more resources is facile, is it not?

Mr. Ashdown: I did not say that all the problem required was more resources. I accept the need for institutional change, as the hon. Gentleman will understand if he listens a little longer. However, that alone cannot change standards. If I may direct the hon. Gentleman back to the 1986 report, he will see a catalogue of the extent to which a lack of decent buildings and equipment has inhibited the proper delivery of education. That point is powerfully expressed in the report. Perhaps he would like to read it again.

On the matter of resources, things will get worse as a result of the Bill. The proposals will require extra costs and a huge new layer of bureaucracy to administer them. Conservative Members need not take my word for that. The Audit Commission, in its response to the Government's proposals, said that the proposals would result in

"a reduction in efficiency . . . duplication of effort"

and a situation where

"if education standards are not to suffer . . . the Government will need to devote greater resources to education . . . to achieve acceptable standards."

We know that the Government will not devote more resources or more money to education, so where will those extra resources come from? There is only one source. They will come from the fixed education budget that we already have. The price of imposing the Tory party's narrow ideology on every school and every pupil in Britain will be further decay of our school buildings, further deficiencies in school equipment and a further decline in the provision of school books.

Another Government claim is that the proposals will somehow remove party political interference, such as we have seen in Brent, from the running of our schools. Nothing could be further from the truth. Education has occasionally suffered from interference from extreme Left-wing town halls, but it will in future be subject to detailed day-to-day control from Whitehall. Indeed, far from removing politics from education, the proposals will ensure that the incubus of party politics is planted at the heart of every school, in the governing bodies themselves.

For proof of that, we need look no further than the words of the Prime Minister. It was she, followed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who told Tory activists at the Tory conference that their first job was to go out and work as hard as they could to ensure that "their people" were in control of governing bodies. Since then a document has been issued by Conservative Central Office entitled "Local Government Campaigning". It details the militant style tactics that should be followed by Conservatives in order to infiltrate majorities on to governing bodies.

The document says:

"Recent legislation has made the job of finding Conservative school governors more important than ever . . . you should encourage Conservative parents to apply to be school governors . . . and encourage Conservatives to attend meetings to ensure that 'our candidates' are appointed".

What can that mean except that the Government wish to use this legislation to impose their ideology on the education system from the top, while insinuating it from the bottom by infiltrating Conservative majorities on to the governing bodies of every school? The inevitable consequence——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I made it clear that I would give way once and I have done so. For reasons of time, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

The inevitable consequence will be that many of our schools and many of our school governing bodies will become just another cockpit for the sort of confrontational politics that have blighted everywhere else in the nation. That is what the Government see as taking political

interference out of our educational system! The truth is that the Bill will achieve none of the aims that the Government's propaganda claims for it.

Of course, the public aims of the Bill are not the whole story. There are hidden, malign threads running through the Bill. There is a concealed agenda containing the real intentions behind the Secretary of State's bland prose and careful propaganda.

The first of those threads is the further prosecution of his personal vendetta against local government. We should not forget that the man who brings forward this legislation is also the author of the poll tax. This was the hand which, in order to satisfy the Prime Minister's vengeance, abolished whole tiers of local government only a few years ago. This Bill comes from the same stable, is aimed at the same target and is designed for the same purpose. It is designed to destroy local government by sucking out its power and drawing all that power into the centre.

The Bill represents a massive concentration of control in the hands of the Secretary of State. He will have 170 new powers by which to dictate, impose or force his will on every school, every governing body and, if necessary, on every pupil in Britain. We are totally opposed to such powers being in the hands of any Government, let alone a Right-wing Government such as this one.

As Conservative Members file into the Lobby to vote these powers into the hands of the Secretary of State, they should have a care. The powers may not always be in the hands of their party. What would happen if we were to swop a blue Ken for a red Ken? What if the powers they will vote to the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) should end up in the hands of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone)? Would they feel as happy and smug about it then?

As long ago as the 1924-29 Tory Government, a Tory Minister, Lord Percy, said that he would not encourage control of the curriculum because nothing could be worse "than to encourage a conception that teachers are servants of Government in the same way that civil servants are, and therefore must teach in their schools precisely what any future Labour Government may tell them to teach".

Those are wise words. They are words that Conservative Members would be wise to heed. We believe that the centralised control of education vested in this Bill will not just be bad for education but will be dangerous for democracy as well.

Another secret item on the Government's agenda is the unscrupulous, undercover and unacceptable reintroduction of selective education. Of course, the Secretary of State does not admit as much, but his junior Ministers and the Prime Minister herself have been somewhat more frank and blunt. The effect of the opting-out proposals, the fact that they are irreversible and the ease with which a school's character can be changed will inevitably and inexorably take us back to the bad old days of selection. They will take us back to the days of a divided education system and the discarding of children at the age of 11. In fact, under this Bill children will be discarded not only at 11 but at seven, 14 and 16 as well.

The next secret intension behind the Bill is that it will produce an education system that is wooden, inflexible and totally without vision. It will produce an education system which is narrow and infused with the ideology of the Government of the day when Britain needs a system that is flexible, broadly based and constantly developing to meet the future. The proposed education system will level pupils down to the tests, whereas we should be raising them up to the limit of their abilities. It will produce an education system that will run the risk of turning schools, once again, into narrow factories churning out raw material for industry, when they should be institutions to enhance individuals for the whole of society.

I shall deal with the key proposals presented in the Bill. My party has always been in favour of a core curriculum. Indeed, it was my colleague, Shirley Williams, then the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who first mentioned the core curriculum as something we should follow. However, we seek a core curriculum built on the consensus and partnership of those involved in education. Instead, the Bill gives us a state curriculum in which teachers are seen not as partners but as servants to do the will of the Government of the day. We seek a curriculum flexible enough to meet local needs and accommodate innovation. The Bill gives us an inflexible curriculum in the hands of the Secretary of State and capable of being changed only through the processes of Parliament.

It is worth adding that the faith of the Secretary of State in his own convictions does not even extend to his sending his own children to the state schools on which he is to impose the curriculum. If the curriculum is good enough to impose on other people's children, why is it not good enough to impose on the independent sector, too? That is the question that he must answer.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Where did Shirley Williams go?

Mr. Ashdown: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

The Secretary of State seeks to impose his proposals on everyone else's children but not on the schools to which his own children go. Why should independent schools fall outside the scope of the proposals?

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I have already given way twice.

Mr. Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. About 60 right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Interventions take time.

Mr. Ashdown: What we object to most about the proposals is that they give enormous power to the Secretary of State. He will have the power to decide individual programmes of study, to impose methods of assessment and to dictate the subjects that are to be taught. Given this Government's record, I would rather appoint King Herod to look after the Save The Children Fund than give the Government extra powers to control education.

The Government's proposals governing the admission of pupils are more unworkable than dangerous. They take no account of the new purposes to which buildings have been put — the establishment of computer rooms and laboratories—or to the space that will have to be found to institute them. The admission proposals will be seen as irrelevant. Moreover, they must result in larger and larger secondary schools, although the Government and everyone else say that we should move towards smaller and smaller schools. Above all, we shall want to know how the Government will ensure that the less well-off with no access to transport can take advantage of the open

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enrolment proposals — or are they to be left out as usual, even if there is no other choice but the local state schools?

Frankly, the Government intend nothing less than the full-scale nationalisation of higher education. That is strange, coming as it does from a party that constantly tells us that it wants to get Government off our backs. Furthermore, the proposals on higher education contain ludicrous contradictions. With one hand, the Government give a welcome new autonomy to polytechnics while with the other they impose a bureaucratic straitjacket of funding so tight that it allows no freedom of manoeuvre whatever. There can be only one reason for that—their desire to control the numbers in further and higher education which can only damage Britain's future. We need more rather than fewer pupils going into further and higher education.

On the Inner London education authority proposals, it is the Government's brazen cheek that amazes me. They have changed their mind about what to do with ILEA no fewer than three times in the past five years. Four years ago, the Secretary of State decided that proposals such as those now before the House would be damaging and would bring into being a rump of poorer deprived boroughs. He tried to explain why he had changed his mind. If he is free to change his mind, why will he not allow ILEA boroughs freedom ever to do the same? Why has he told them that, once they have made their choice, they can never go back? The Secretary of State tells us that he is doing all this for the parents, so why will he not allow boroughs to vote to return to ILEA if they wish to do so? The answer is that he wants to impose his will. He is not really interested in the views of parents or others.

I find one aspect of the ILEA proposals most revealing. The Secretary of State has always had the power to tackle the problems of London education should he wish to do so, but he has never chosen to use those powers. There can be only one reason for that: his first concern has never been for the education of London or for the future of the pupils who suffer in its schools. He has sacrificed those priorities so that he can make his political point and introduce these dangerous and unworkable proposals.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made some powerful points about grant-maintained schools. The proposals governing such schools are the most pernicious and damaging in the Bill. Perhaps most important of all is the fact that the proposals in their present form will simply prevent any local education authority from planning for the future, because any school that it wishes to bring within its planning proposals can simply opt out at any time. As a consequence, local education authorities will be unable to manage overall education resources for the benefit of their area. They will be unable to rationalise resources to provide greater efficiency. They will be blocked from creating more tertiary colleges and inhibited from integrating special needs. The proposals are deeply damaging.

We accept that education needs reform, not because we swallow the Government's black propaganda about the failures of the present system but because change is essential to meet the needs of our children and of the generations yet to come. An education Bill could achieve so much, but this Bill achieves none of it. We could make a commitment to put more resources into education. Instead, the Government will continue to underfund our schools while loading more burdens on to them. We could create new mechanisms to provide individual choice in schools so that students can pursue their particular abilities. Instead, the Government force parents to make one-off choices between schools, all too frequently at the expense of those left behind. We could be treating parents as partners in the education of their children. Instead, the Government seek to use parents as a power base for their politics.

We shall vote against the Bill for two reasons: first, it wastes a precious opportunity to reform our education system; and, secondly, it will destroy opportunities for many of the nation's children.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I appeal to hon. Members to make brief contributions? I have no authority to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches, but if right hon. and hon. Members limited themselves to 10 minutes, many more of them could be called.

6.18 pm

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): In view of the injunction to keep speeches short, I shall not follow the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) through his speech, which was, if I may say so, a brilliant collection of 1960s buzz words and phrases. It illustrated why there is a deep doctrinal split between the two halves of what was once the alliance. When the hon. Gentleman said that there were two reasons why he would vote against the Bill I thought that one of them was the Liberal reason and the other was the SDP reason.

I welcome the Bill and support it in virtually every respect. No doubt some amendments will be made during the Bill's passage through Parliament. Unless the drafting of Bills has improved greatly since I left the Government, I expect that there will be many Government amendments. I have no doubt that this will not be the last Education Reform Bill of the decade. It is almost inevitable that another Bill will be required to take the reforms forward.

I do not wish to pick a quarrel with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), but he should not worry too much about criticisms relating to autocracy or shortness of time on the Bill. It is within all our recollections that the Counter-Inflation (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1972—that is, the control of prices and wages by central diktat of Government—was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and was given a Second Reading on 8 November 1972.

The debate finished at 10 o'clock that night. It was then guillotined. The Bill had three days in Committee, and was read the Third time on 20 November. That is fairly brisk progress for a Bill that not only was not in the party's manifesto but was specifically excluded from it by a pledge in that manifesto. I should not worry too much about any comments about one nation from the man who was the Prime Minister when this country was plunged into the three-day week and when the party and the country were almost irrevocably split.

I refer now to the other Opposition. I agree with my right hon. Friend; it is not a terribly effective Opposition. Their problem is that, having no policies of their own, they have simply got to oppose for the sake of opposition. That

springs essentially from an extremely unhealthy master and servant relationship between the producer trade unions and their agents, the Labour party. We shall hear nothing from the official Opposition about the interest of the consumer and everything about the interest of the producer.

I have one hope about the Bill's progress through the House. In an attempt to show value for money, the official Opposition will insist on having about 80 hours' debate on clauses 1 to 3 or thereabouts in Committee, and then force a guillotine.

Mr. Straw: That is not true.

Mr. Tebbit: The hon. Gentleman says that it is not true. I hope that it is not true. I hope that he will seek to get a deal with the Government tonight on the time that will be spent in Committee, so that there can be proper discussion throughout the proceedings. If he wants a guillotine to show his paymasters that he has a bloody neck, I am sure that we can give him a guillotine by arrangement.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Tebbit: I am terribly sorry: for the same reasons that other hon. Members have given. I cannot give way.

My right hon. Friend was fortunate to become Secretary of State when the consensus was beginning to emerge from many years of discussion within Government about such contentious matters as the the future of ILEA. I have never changed sides in that matter. From the beginning, I was in favour of abolition, and I am extremely proud that my colleagues have now come around to that view.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Gentleman would abolish education altogether —for us.

Mr. Tebbit: I notice, Mr. Speaker, that I am under attack from the intellectual wing of the Labour party.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend will want to pay tribute to the influence of our colleague, my noble Friend Lord Joseph, which brought us to these conclusions. Equally, I am sure that my noble Friend Lord Joseph, would want to pay tribute to the political skills of the Secretary of State, who has crystallised many long debates into legislation that has been brought before the House.

I have made the point that I want to keep my remarks brief. My right hon. Friend made the case for the Bill extremely well. I shall not try to gild each petal of the lily, but there are some points and criticisms—a little advice, perhaps a reservation or two and some encouragement that I shall offer to him. I strongly welcome his proposals for colleges of further education to be more fully opted out and to operate commercially. The experience of many of them as contractors to the managers of YTS schemes brought them into the habit of competing for business and attuned them to the market. That has been an extremely good thing for them and is widely welcomed by principals of the FE colleges that have taken part.

A mixture of grants, attached firmly to students, and, perhaps, vouchers would do more than anything else to help colleges of further education to supply skilled and motivated people to join the work force of this country and to take our economic development forward so that we can spend more money where necessary to improve our education services even further.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will also encourage experiments in offering universities, polytechnics, and colleges of technology the chance to tender competitively for work in training students to first degree level in what are now largely taught subjects, such as many engineering subjects. Again, that would introduce the market and some discipline into universities in a way that would be extremely welcome and would open a few more windows into ivory towers and accustom people to the idea that there is another way, other than the traditional way, of measuring success and attainment.

Like many Opposition Members, I have long thought that a national curriculum would be welcome. It is an excellent concept. However, my right hon. Friend must beware that that concept is not wrecked by the paternalists and bureaucrats in the Department of Education and Science. He has to tread a narrow path between the danger of the national curriculum becoming set in concrete, as some hon. Members have suggested, and becoming just a matter of fudge and therefore totally ineffective. He is right to have a core curriculum—that is fine—but I counsel him not to overdo it.

Perhaps this Christmas, when my right hon. Friend is at home with his own children and looks at the Christmas tree, I am sure that he will agree that, although he can be responsible for the tree itself and the main parts of its decoration, he does not have precisely to position every little decoration on it. I recommend that he take the same view about the curriculum.

Enough consumer choice will encourage the professionalism among schoolteachers, and certainly among the best teachers, needed to produce the curricula that will please parents and do well for children. The best teachers will then inspire lesser teachers to follow their example. I counsel my right hon. Friend to avoid the twin dangers of concrete on one side and fudge on the other.

I counsel him also to be absolutely firm on testing. He must stand firm on pupils' attainment levels. Of course, resistance to testing comes not from pupils and parents but from teachers. It is a fear of quality control. A mark of producer-driven industry is resistance to quality control. Of course that is against consumers' interests. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was wrong. He talked about these being tests of kids. No, they are not, as was implied by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) whose maiden speech I greatly enjoyed. Of course parents say, "I want to know how my child is doing at school." But the tests will establish something else. They will tell how my child's teachers are doing. That is why they are being resisted, and being particularly resisted by the agents of producer industries.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will not unduly rely on the role of school governors.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Tebbitt: I am sorry, but I really must not give way.

It is a Socialist concept that consumers must manage production to get a fair deal. If I may take the liberty of paraphrasing him, that is essentially what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said.

Mr. Heath: Not in that case.

Mr. Tebbitt: In that case, I have a difference with my right hon. Friend again. I try to find common ground

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where I can. The concept of customers having to manage in order to get a decent deal was the concept which prevented the co-operative movement from ever being able to compete with Sainsburys or Tescos in the high street. It is essentially a Socialist concept which gave us consumer councils to try to control nationalised industries in the interests of consumers, and that failed too.

Mr. Ashdown: So we got a privatised British Telecom —and that was better?

Mr. Tebbit: I will not go into that, because I have a particular interest and the House does not welcome those with an interest making the case, but I would be glad to take the hon. Gentleman outside and give him a lecture about it. Rational, normal people do not want to manage their local supermarket or local branch of Marks and Spencer to get decent service. Boards of governors will always risk being filled with non-representative activists or ineffective people who do very little.

I thought the hon. Member for Yeovil had a pretty good cheek in quoting from a Conservative publication. He must have read the sort of stuff that comes from the Association of Liberal Councillors, its accounts of dirty tricks which have to be played and the way in which politics should be taken everywhere. He is probably familiar with its account of dirty tricks being played against his partners at the moment. My right hon. Friend should not rely just on the governors to opt schools out, but should himself consider taking positive powers to opt schools out to ensure that consumer choice is widely spread more quickly.

The Bill is a great reform Bill, in line with others of the past eight years. That is why the opposition comes from the same entrenched interests, some even from the Government as well as from the Opposition. The unions and their bag carriers in the Labour party claim that parents do not want choice, that they are not capable of exercising choice and that they like what they get today. Let us wait and see, because that is the story they gave us when we proposed selling council houses. They said that council tenants did not want to be home owners, they were not sufficiently responsible, if they became home owners they would neglect their homes, and, in any case, it would make all the others worse. That is exactly the same argument they gave us against reform of the trade unions, when they said that trade unionists did not want to ballot to elect their leaders or to decide whether or not to go on strike and anyway, if they were allowed ballots they would only elect extremists and would be on strike all the time.

In other words, they said, "Don't trust the people." That has been a familiar strain for a long time, as far back as when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup ended resale price maintenance. The reactionaries, paternalists and producer interests said that shoppers were incapable of recognising value for money and that they liked fixed prices, not competition.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): They were on the Government side.

Mr. Tebbit: Indeed, many were on the Government side, but that was the Conservative party that was, not the Conservative party that is. I pay great tribute to my right hon. Friend for his role in starting the era of change in the Tory party from the defender of the producer to the defender of the consumer. The same reactionaries today oppose income tax cuts. They say that wage earners are unfit to decide their own priorities and need a nanny state to tell them not only where they can live, who their trade union leaders are and which school their children must go to, but how they should spend their wage packet.

The Bill extends choice and responsibility. Of course some will choose badly or irresponsibly, but that cannot and must not be used as an excuse to deny choice and responsibility to the great majority. Today only the wealthy have choice in education, and that must change. We accept that people have the common sense and maturity to form political parties and select party candidates—with one or two exceptions in the Labour party, where it is now denied to them—to vote for the local authorities which will become the LEAs and to vote for Members of Parliament.

The opposition to the Bill arises from the mistrust of people's ability to manage their affairs and make choices. Perhaps the Labour party has reason to believe that it should doubt the wisdom of the people after the treatment it has had in the past 10 years, but that does not apply to Government Members. We trust the people and believe that they are the best defenders of their own interests. That is why I support the Bill.

6.36 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): It is as if the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is the true begetter of the Bill. He referred to the doctrinal spirit on the alliance Benches, but earlier he observed the so-evident split between the Treasury Bench and the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He went for the jugular of his former Prime Minister, in typical splitting image manner, being extremely rude to him, and then was at his chintzy best with his Christmas tree image. I shall treasure the look of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) at the side of the right hon. Member for Chingford as he made his speech.

I declare my sponsorship by the National Union of Teachers. The Secretary of State for Education and Science delivered a low-key, silken speech, but he took a very heavy mauling from the former Prime Minister. When last did a former Prime Minister describe a major Bill of his own party on Second Reading as a confidence trick? Has that ever taken place?

Mr. Stott: His former PPS.

Mr. Jones: The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has the steel, and he brought the House alive today.

When the Government have finished their political business, the education service, like other public services, will be hanging like a gutted rabbit outside the poulterer's shop. It is repugnant to hear the Cabinet's Second Reading proposals, while en masse Cabinet Members are sending their sons and daughters to elitist public schools.

The Bill is a reform opportunity for the better-off, not for the under-privileged. It is an opportunity for the highly motivated middle-class parents of Sussex, Kent or Hampshire and for the cathedral towns and university enclaves, perhaps summed up by saying that the Bill is for sleek, middle England. The Bill cannot hope to end the divisions between north and south. It heavily underlines the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

It is worth looking at the Bill in the context of mass unemployment, the sale of the nation's assets, the export of capital and the rundown of our welfare state—all the worries of our communities. Will the Bill help beleaguered black communities in rotting city centres or the jobless in the steel closure townships of Wales and north Britain? It will not help the stricken shipbuilding areas of the north-east, where unemployment is at its worst. It will not help to cope with the dereliction of the old cotton empire in the north-west of England.

Regrettably, the unimaginable and God given has happened—since 1979, the God-given reserves of North sea oil have not been used by the Conservative Administration to construct a confident state school system. We must remember that the Government have held office since 1979 and had the benefit of the revenue from North sea oil. Since 1979, the Conservative Administration have failed our youngsters.

We must consider the reality. Many parents are at their wits' end about the prospects for the education of their children. They are desperate for investment; they want repairs and extensions to their schools; they want classrooms, halls and corridors decorated; they want equipment repaired and replaced and they want better and new textbooks. Anyone who believes that that is an exaggeration need only read the reports of Her Majesty's inspectorate for England and Wales. It is a worrying catalogue, even though it is couched in diplomatic language. It is a condemnation of the stewardship of the Conservative Administration.

I met a group of youngsters at a high school in Queensferry in my constituency about a fortnight ago. I realised that, although I represent a constituency with high unemployment, I had underestimated its impact on the lives of those youngsters. Even at the tender age of 15, they were worried about the difficulties of obtaining proper paid jobs. There was somebody in each of their families who was jobless, and it was encroaching on their young lives at school.

Teachers are demoralised; the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup effectively demonstrated that. They are angry and worried about job security. They feel that they have been misrepresented by Ministers, and have become vulnerable as changes advance. What I find worrying, as a former class teacher and a former Education Minister, is the growing divide between the head teacher and his staff, between the head's study and the common room, as the Government have successively imposed their will on the teaching profession. That is not good for our children, and the Bill exacerbates this worrying problem.

The Government are stupid in not realising that, if teachers are not happy, they cannot give of their best for our youngsters. The Government have declared war on the teaching profession and they will pay bitterly for that.

Administrators consider the Bill to be an immense advance in the Secretary of State's powers. In future years, their capacity to help and advise schools in working-class areas will diminish to the point of futility.

I must tell the Secretary of State that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Wales, and I suspect in England, is worried about some aspects of the Bill. I ask him and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to meet the Archbishop of Wales and his bishops from the Roman Catholic church to discuss their fears.

The Secretary of State quoted Disraeli and referred to Balfour and R. A. Butler. The advance to full citizenship of ordinary people in Britain has been by post-war reforms and by free and universal education provision. Mr. Gladstone said that we had better educate our masses, Mr. Butler codified the requirements — age, ability and aptitude—and Mr. Attlee delivered the new service.

I think that the Bill will be unworkable. The current position is unsatisfactory and the Bill will make it worse. The Secretary of State made the best of a bad Bill by his clever presentation. However, I accuse him of placing his ambition to succeed the Prime Minister before his duty to the nation's school service. I further accuse him of setting parents against teachers. He is starving the service of adequate funds, sufficient teachers and sufficient equipment. What we need to prepare our school service for the difficulties of the next century is a healer at the helm, not a divider.

We want a ministerial statesman, not a partisan. By the Bill, the Government are throwing away the chance of educational advance based on a national unity of purpose. Our 21st century future will be weakened by the grave defects of the Bill. This is an unjust Bill; the Secretary of State should be ashamed of presenting it, and it must be stopped.

6.46 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): It is an honour and a privilege to be a member of the greatest Parliament in the world, and in particular to represent the Hexham constituency. It is a daunting task to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Geoffrey Rippon, who achieved pre-eminence in each of his three chosen professions — in politics as a senior Cabinet Minister, in the law as a Queen's counsel and in business as a company chairman. That is the mark of a man of rare talent. I hope that I can achieve equal success in my one chosen profession of politics.

The Hexham constituency must be the most stunningly beautiful seat in the country, containing the most hospitable and generous of people. It is 1,000 square miles that is rich in history and diverse in its activities, including farming, forestry and factories.

The north traditionally breeds tough Members of Parliament who have stamina — with the distances involved, that is necessarily so. Although my constituents are warm and welcoming people, they will not be pushed around and will defend their interests. At this very moment my village of Gilsland is fighting off an annexation attempt by Cumbria. Next year, we shall successfully celebrate the 600th anniversary of the battle of Otterburn.

Our engineering skills built the eighth wonder of the world — Hadrian's wall. Admittedly, some of the workers may have been unwilling in their task, but my constituents are canny and shrewd enough to know a good investment when they see one.

As for agriculture, I can assure the House that the farmers are friendly, the people are proud, the cattle are content and the sheep are satisfied. With regard to industry, we have the best and the famous, and have firms that are not to be sneezed at: Kimberley Clarke makes Kleenex; Crown Paints are at Haltwhistle; Espagna International is in Hexham; and Killfrost constantly wins Queen's awards for industry.

[Mr. Alan Amos]

If it is leisure that one is looking for in the constituency, there is Hexham abbey, Kielder Water, Northumberland national park, the beauty of Byrness, cultivated Corbridge and the excitement of the Allenheads project. If one wants something a little more mysterious — I am sure that some hon. Members may — there is the Allendale tar barrelling festival, which happens on new year's day. Yet so successful have we been in attracting new enterprises to the area that, from Prudhoe to Ponteland and from Haltwhistle to Haydon Bridge, we need bypasses; I hope the Government will take note. Incidentally, we also need the dualling of the A69 west of Hexham.

My sincere belief in the spirit of enterprise leads me to urge the House to support the Bill. Providing that there is the safety net of a welfare state to help people in real and genuine need, peace and prosperity can best be achieved through a policy of equality of opportunity in an endeavour to build a meritocracy, a society in which everyone has a real chance to make of their lives what they will, regardless of who or what they are. Let us not seek, therefore, after the illusion of equality of achievement, for that is the one thing which both the United States and the Soviet Union agree is misguided.

We are all too familiar with the cycle of deprivation or the poverty trap. The best and perhaps only way in which individuals and groups can escape from their disadvantages of birth is through a system of free state education which provides every child with an appropriate and stimulating curriculum, together with a means to ensure that his or her potential is realised. I look forward to the day when the independent sector contracts considerably because parents have so much confidence in state schools that they no longer want or need to send their children to private schools.

The Bill deserves the support of the House because it is a radical and reforming measure which boldly and imaginatively creates a dynamic framework to take our education system fully into the 21st century by properly identifying and doing something about the nation's needs. We are looking not only at what is taught but at how it is being taught. The Bill will ensure that we have a well educated, adaptable, mobile and tolerant work force and society. Our economy, social customs and lifestyles are undergoing a massive transformation. Therefore, we simply do not have the option as to whether or not our education system should experience similar forces. It must. Rather than just reacting to events, the system should harness and channel this great social and economic revolution.

I find it predictable and therefore so very depressing that, while so many vested interests pay lip service to the need for change and say that they believe in the national curriculum and in decision-making being taken down to the most local level, we then face criticism when we introduce these very proposals. Yet we are not offered any constructive alternatives. My local education authority and the schools in Northumberland are justly praised for many of their innovations and for undertaking so many exciting initiatives in curriculum development. Our proposals will encourage further positive developments.

Let us be honest; there is a national problem. As a teacher for eight years in a state school I always found it a tragic waste to see so many youngsters being needlessly and pointlessly dragged through watered down academic courses in which they had no interest and for which they had little aptitude or ability. Their innate skills and interests were being wasted. I found that tragic. Therefore, we are right to challenge the status quo.

Mass comprehensivisation — and I taught in a comprehensive school—has not proved the panacea to bring about higher standards. If it were, we would not be discussing this Bill. Last week's report from the adult literacy and basic skills unit showed that 6 million adults have basic problems with reading, writing, spelling and simple arithmetic, all at a time when society demands an increasingly highly qualified work force.

The unthinking hostility towards assessment and testing is misguided. Unless children are provided with targets to work towards and then tested to see how far their targets have been achieved, how can we ever know whether pupils and schools are realising their potential? It is not a question of pass or fail but rather of assessing what a child has achieved in relation to what he or she could have achieved. For example, how do we know that the schools with the best examination results have not become complacent?

When I was chairman of Enfield education committee, where I was on good terms with the chief officers, I was always being told, "Alan, this policy is impossible." My reply unfailingly was, "Right; go ahead and do it." So the impossible was done time and time again. For example, we published our examination results before we were obliged to do so. All the predicted disasters of league tables did not materialise. In fact, the main result was a determination by all schools to improve their performance. The point was that parents had a right to that information. Whether or not they used it was entirely up to them, but they had the right to it.

In our burgeoning enterprise culture, we are building a land of liberty and opportunity. But the extent of liberty depends on a knowledge of what there is and of what more is possible, and opportunity is only possible if people are encouraged to take advantage of the possibilities of improvement without the hindrances of those social engineers who wish to prevent the dynamism of diversity. That is why the House should back the concept of open enrolment. Why should the choice of parents be artificially curtailed? Who are the people who say that they know best?

Open enrolment and city technology colleges will give millions of people an escape route from the deprivation of many neighbourhood comprehensives. It is the height of arrogance for some people to assume that working class parents are not as interested in their children's education as are middle class parents. Six years ago when I was advocating for Enfield the very policies now in the Bill, I was told that they were impossible. That fact alone gives me enormous reason to believe that they will be a great success, like all the other impossibilities.

Let us again challenge the stodgy thinking head on, this time on the right of schools to opt out. If a majority of parents and governors are so dissatisfied with the quality of education in their school, who has the right to stop them seeking a way to improve standards?

One strength of the Bill is that so much of it rests on the principle of popular choice. It will be up to the people themselves to decide whether their school is to opt out of LEA control and whether schools should expand or contract. Nobody need fear our proposals. Far from it —people should see them as a golden opportunity to be

grasped which will make the classroom more relevant to the world of work. Therefore, I proclaim that the days of the trendy lefty establishment are numbered, and that the people are taking over at last.

6.55 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on his maiden speech. The wit, confidence and interesting detail with which he described his constituency and the local customs show that he will add colour and interest to our future debates.

As someone who has taught for over 30 years, I wish to speak about the real world in schools and in the classrooms. Over a long teaching career I have seen fashions come and fashions go. With each swing of the pendulum zealots tend to throw out the baby with the bathwater, much to the detriment of the children for whom those years may be their sole education.

At the moment, it seems to be fashionable to attack and throw out the concept of child-centred education. That is a concept for which our primary schools are justly famous. Visitors come from all over the world to see what we are doing and how our child-centred education operates. Child-centred education is linked with continous assessment.

Years ago, I taught 45 children in a class. We tested them with exams and placed them in each subject and in all subjects overall. That was fine for those who came in the first three, but disastrous for those who came near the bottom. Hon. Members will remember from their own childhood that those who came in the first three were always the same. That kind of testing did great damage. It is much harder for teachers to carry out continous assessment.

Today's teachers—I thank the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) for his kind remarks about teachers — are competent, devoted, and hard-working. They care about the children they teach and they know each child thoroughly. Child-centred education with continuous assessment enables each child to reach his or her full potential. The children are happy, and children who are happy learn well, while children who are unhappy with a bad self-image do not.

All civilised people want children with special needs to be integrated into ordinary schools. Child-centred education enables that to be done, provided the schools are not starved of resources—an important factor.

The Minister talked about parents' right to know how their children are getting on. Parents of children whose teachers engage in continuous assessment are given a good picture on open day of how their children are getting on. In the old grammar school, the teacher would often sit there with a book full of marks, but was not too sure to which child those marks referred. That testing did not do much good when parents asked to know how their child was getting on but got a bit of waffle instead.

Conservative Members have a misplaced faith in testing. Testing is not teaching, and time spent in testing and keeping account of it detracts from the available contact time with the children. Therefore, one must be sure that such testing is valid.

Is the testing objective? Multiple choice tests are fairly objective, but essay-type tests, such as at O and A-level, can only be marked subjectively. I do not want to go into the correlation between A-level results and eventual achievement at university, but it is a total failure.

I want to talk about my experience of teaching children in the days of the 11-plus because experience is a good measure. In those days as a young teacher I used to ask children—perhaps not very imaginatively—to write an essay entitled "Myself" when they first came to the school. This was a quick way to find out something about them. The essays were always the same or similar—"I broke my arm; I was in hospital; I had my tonsils out; my nan died; my cat was run over." There was always a series of disasters which ended with "I failed the 11-plus."

This means that I was faced with a class of depressed children who, at the age of 11, were convinced that they were failures, whose self-image was destroyed, and, what is more, many of whose parents were convinced that their children were failures. And that was even worse because then they had no one but the teacher to try to build up their confidence. Sometimes it took years to restore the self-image of such children and sometimes it could not be done at all. Children whose self-image is bad do not achieve their potential or learn well. The 11-plus was a vicious examination.

I remember once in a restaurant a well-dressed, well-spoken, pleasant young man coming up to me and saying, "Mrs. Gordon, I used to go to the school where you taught, but you will not remember me because you taught the 'A' stream and I was a 'C'." I never felt so guilty as in that moment when that young man, who had made something of his life and had done well, was back there in the C stream as soon as he saw me. The cruelty of that system and the knowledge that I was part of it determined me to fight against it ever being reintroduced.

We are now being asked to extend that cruelty to younger and younger children. Public testing at the age of seven means that the teacher must cast a beady eye on five-year-olds to see whether they will pass the 7-plus. No; that is something that we must fight. That only gives choice to the early starters who are a small minority. At least 75 per cent. will be left out of that system and the cruelty that it perpetrates cannot be denied.

I have always believed that the creation of the small outer London education authorities was a mistake. I worked for the old London county council, which was replaced by ILEA. I worked for Brent and I worked for 12 years for Barnet. Hon. Members may be surprised to know that Brent and Barnet were not very different. Those small authorities could not give the facilities, the opportunities or the help to the teachers and the children that a larger authority, which could rationalise its resources, could give. The further fragmentation of education authorities will be disastrous.

Since I have been in Parliament, which is not very long, I have received letters from constituents for and against every new Bill that is proposed. I have not received a single letter in favour of the opting-out proposal. I have had petitions and letters from governors, parent-teacher associations and individuals, all against that proposal. All feel that it will be a disaster for the children in Tower Hamlets, and I feel it, too. I hope that the Tower Hamlets council will not make the mistake of taking the choice that will be offered to them by this dreadful Bill.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Gordon: I do not think so. It would not be fair to those 60 hon. Members who still want to speak, and I want to come to a conclusion.

Teachers have been antagonised and maligned by the Government. The idea of adding the equivalent of five working days to their year fails to recognise the fact that almost every teacher I know has given 10 times that amount of extra work voluntarily without being asked, and it is a slur on and an insult to the teaching profession.

What is really behind the Bill? The Government have antagonised teachers and now they will antagonise parents and governors. The Bill is not a revolutionary improvement in education but will put the clock back. It is a return to elitism. It will lead inevitably to the creation of sink schools and will undermine the good work that has been done by comprehensive schools in raising standards.

The Bill will create great disappointment in many parents who have been fooled into believing that it will be easier for them to send their children to their preferred school. The majority of parents now get the preferred school, but the Bill will mean that, instead of parents choosing schools, schools will choose the parents. Behind the Bill there is the sinister shadow of vouchers. If vouchers are ever introduced, those who have money to add to the vouchers will get a good education for their children; the rest of the children will get a voucher education which will create sink schools, starved of resources—a low level of education for children who are destined for the dole.

I do not like this Bill. I hope that education authorities will not fall into its trap, and I hope that something can be done to save our children from the torments of the examinations it suggests.

7.9 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): I begin by saying how impressed I—and, I am sure, the whole House—have been by the two excellent maiden speeches on the Government side to which we have listened today. As is customary, we heard much about the constituencies my hon. Friends represent and we found the descriptions interesting. But what will have impressed everyone was the conspicuous eloquence of those who have had first-hand experience of the subject about which they speak. They had obviously excelled at their jobs as teachers, and they brought their experience to the House in their contributions to this debate. We shall remember what they have said and will look forward to future contributions from them. We hope that they will do as well on wider subjects as they have on education.

There is a real and well-rehearsed controversy that surrounds every attempt of central Government to influence or direct the affairs of local authorities. There is a proper constitutional debate about whether powers should be left to local people to determine or whether responsibilities should be assumed by Secretaries of State; but in practice all of us who have seen this conflict waged in various spheres over the past 10 or 20 years know very well that the constitutional niceties of the issue are always set out on one side and that Governments are, quite rightly, determined to have their way where they accept a proper responsibility for the provision of a service.

This case is no exception. We are dealing with a mandate given to this Government and the determination of the Secretary of State to bring about a fundamental reform in the provision of education. Of course, all those who object will say that there has been insufficient consultation and inadequate time, although they will then spend a great deal of time explaining why they thought of many of the ideas in this Bill and why various earlier Governments or parties had consultation documents or great debates in another era, and how much of what we are doing has been under discussion for as long as one can conveniently remember.

So I urge my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State—who needs no encouragement—to stand his ground and to proceed with this legislation, controversial though it undoubtedly is. The reality is that we needed controversy in education long ago and that what my right hon. Friend is now attempting to do is not a matter for regret, except in the sense that it is long overdue. The debate about the quality of educational provision in this country and its inadequacy when compared with that of our European neighbours has gone on for a hundred years. One of the features of our failure to deal with the problem is that Government have remained detached while carrying all the responsibility. They have lacked the ability to produce results. It is this problem that the debate on the present Bill is intended to resolve.

Let us have no illusions about the scale of the reforms which my right hon. Friend has addressed. He is pointing to a less comfortable world and it will, in that sense, be more difficult, more arduous and more demanding for those who go through the educational process. He addresses these problems because he knows that if he is not prepared to insist that children are equipped to the standards of the modern world, they will miss out on the opportunities of that world, and he is determined that this shall not happen. At every stage, therefore, from childhood to adulthood and in every part of the education process, individuals will have to carry a greater responsibility for their own performance.

Instead of a system which seeks to obscure everyone's ability for fear that the less able will lose out, we shall have a much franker and more stimulating environment where success is recognised and measured. Instead of hiding the examination results of all schools so that no one can point to indifferent results, we shall see schools competing to persuade parents that the standards of individual schools are the highest available. Teachers will be judged against the background of facts that relate to their school and their performance. The more generalised, the more cosy and the less accountable days are over, in education as in many other aspects of British performance.

Many teachers will welcome a clarification of the standards that they are expected to achieve and will respond with pride in their ability to achieve them. No one should see these proposals as being against the interests of teachers. We all know—and the Secretary of State is right to point it out—of the dedication of many in that profession, and we certainly know that those who are today charged with teaching our children are the generation of teachers upon whom we are totally dependent for the performance of our children as they grow up. They are the teachers whom we have; we must be proud of them and support them, although it is perfectly legitimate for Government to expect them to measure up to the highest standards available.

We also know that these proposals will shift the emphasis of the debate away from those who only talk about standards in favour of those who want to prove that they can achieve standards. Those who will gain most from

this process are not the most talented children because they will come through whatever the system: they have a natural ability to win and they will win. The people who will prove to be the greatest beneficiaries of what we are discussing here tonight are those forgotten children of whom nothing is expected and who achieve little.

Regular testing — we are talking only about core testing in English, maths and science—is not designed to propel those children into obscurity at the back of the form. That is precisely what the present system does. The low attainer in our present system rapidly becomes the no attainer. Regular testing will have the opposite effect, as those children who are at the bottom of the pile will, as a consequence of the special tests to be applied, expect to receive special remedial tuition to bring them up to the standards below which they would otherwise fall. It is these children who are the natural recruits to the queues of the long-term unemployed. These are the people who stand to gain most from personal testing which prevents them from getting into that situation in the first place.

We have heard a lot from Opposition Members about the standards in the inner cities following the introduction of comprehensive education. What those right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have forgotten is that, as they set out to end social division by abolishing grammar and secondary modern schools and introducing and imposing comprehensive education, what they actually did by their social engineering was to extend the geographical separation and division of people in our society, because the inner-city comprehensive was so decisively separated from the suburban comprehensive that a whole generation of those who could afford to choose — including large numbers of people who used to vote for the Labour party —went to the suburbs and the new housing estates; and the effect on those left behind was catastrophic. It is the addressing of this problem that is at the heart of the matter.

In commending the thrust of this legislation, I want to urge my right hon. Friend to look again at two specific parts of the Bill. I do this not from any hesitation in supporting what my right hon. Friend seeks to achieve but from precisely the opposite stance. My concern arises from the voluntary nature of some of the proposals. I must say to him—he will understand the spirit in which I say it—that his characteristic tolerance and generosity may indeed overwhelm his best intentions if he pursues the voluntary route.

Mr. Flannery: You are killing us.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has been dead from the neck up for years.

The first proposal which I would like to discuss with my right hon. Friend is that of opting out. No one pretends — certainly not my right hon. Friend — that he can foresee the pace at which individual decisions to opt out will be made. Without contradiction, it is obvious that in many parts of the country the right to opt out will coincide with a substantial fall in the number of children in our schools. The number of children of secondary school age will have fallen by 1,100,000 between 1979 and 1990. Between 1990 and the end of the century, under a quarter of that dramatic drop of more than 1 million children will have been restored. When we consider the regional variations and specifically the balance within the urban community in the regions, we realise that there is a spiral of educational decline that adds a dramatic additional dimension to the urban problem already affecting many of the less privileged parts of the community.

To manage that scale of reduction and achieve value for money in the education programme, it must follow that very significant reductions in the number of schools must take place. The worst outcome would be to run our educational system within buildings that are only half or two thirds used. That is not only the worst way to raise the quality of education, but, as the Audit Commission has said, it perpetuates an annual waste of the best part of £750 million because we are not getting value for money out of the existing educational budget. No hon. Member of whatever party can afford to ignore wasted expenditure of the tune of £750 million a year if he is seeking to improve educational standards.

The responsibility for proposing reorganisation lies exclusively with local education authorities. It is predictable that any proposed closure within such a reorganisation is likely to precipitate a local popular demand to opt out for the schools that are threatened with closure. Where excess capacity is built into the system, the Secretary of State will no more want to pay the bills for that excess capacity than the local education authority. Expectations will have been raised and indeed possibly encouraged by local politicians anxious to divert attention from what they know must happen by suggesting that somehow or other my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have a pot of gold to keep the school in existence. When my right hon. Friend faces a choice between frustrating a rationalisation or saying no to parents who want to opt out, he will find himself disappointing people and conceivably incurring political odium for doing so.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no powers to put forward any positive rationalisation proposals of his own. He is in danger of having to accept indifferent rationalisation proposals and having to turn down unacceptable opt-out proposals. He may not wish to wait until after rationalisation before approving an opt-out. I do not suggest that he separates the two procedures by insisting that there is a rationalisation before opt-out. I suggest that my right hon. Friend protects himself from a situation in which his essentially negative powers leave him having to refuse requests from local parents while being able to do no more than accept, reject or tinker at the margin with the rationalisation proposals of local education authorities. I stress that my right hon. Friend's power of modification is only at the margin of the proposals put to him by education authorities. I believe that that is a fundamental weakness which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be wise to address.

I urge my right hon. Friend to make himself a positive party to the rationalisation process. The Department of Education and Science should be able to submit its rationalisation plans alongside those of the local education authority and the Secretary of State should be able to submit both plans to a form of local consultation to be determined, as now, by the Secretary of State. Such a proposal is new in education, but is not unprecedented, as anyone familiar with planning or transportation politics must realise. Central Governments put forward proposals and sometimes they put forward competing proposals. There are inquiries, inspectors' reports and the Secretary of State then determines.

A further advantage of the proposal is that it would force local education authorities which were being dilatory

[Mr. Heseltine]

in putting forward reorganisation plans — for fear, perhaps, that they would precipitate the very opt-out problems that they wish to avoid—to accept that they have no choice but to get on with the urgent task of rationalising the provision of education to meet the much lower demand created by the changing population.

It will be argued that that is further centralism. I do not want to deny that, because in a sense that is so. I do not see anything inherently unacceptable in such a proposition. I believe that the concept that the Secretary of State should be responsible for the standards of education in this country, but that he should be denied the tools to do the job effectively, is fundamentally flawed. The essence of the legislation is that central Government are taking powers to reform education. Government have the right to do that. They are reforming education not to concentrate power on themselves, but to shift power out into the hands of the heads, governors and parents involved. That is a process of decentralising power and educational opportunities, but it may need the positive role of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He should consider taking that role.

My second and even more substantial concern lies with the Government's proposals for the Inner London education authority. I must ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to bear with me, as he has heard my views on this subject many times. When I persuaded the Cabinet to get rid of the Greater London council and the metropolitan councils it was my one regret that we could not carry that very much required reform through by removing ILEA at the same time.

I simply do not understand how the metropolitan districts of the north-west, the north-east, Yorkshire, the west midlands and the outer London boroughs can be considered perfectly able to provide a local authority education service and yet in the inner London boroughs that service must be carried out by an educational dinosaur of historic proportions. If ILEA's costs were lower and its standards were higher, I could understand the arguments, but no one can begin to base a case on either of those assumptions because the evidence does not exist.

It used to be said that the complexity of the further education system in central London precluded a break-up of ILEA. Now, quite rightly, the Secretary of State has blown that argument out of the water by giving the polytechnics their independence. What was deemed impossible, is now almost miraculously possible. However, having rightly determined to break the log jam, the Government have replaced that with what I perceive to be the next worst solution. The concept is that ILEA should be allowed to wither on the vine and that those boroughs that want to opt out should be free to do so while those that remain should be clustered around in some ever-dimishing political laager.

I understand the argument for voluntarism that lies behind such an approach. I believe that the case against ILEA is so overwhelming that such an approach is an appropriate and legitimate decision for Government to take. The cause of effective education and the pursuit of better value for money in the centre of the capital city should be the prime consideration, not how we allow the rundown of ILEA to take place.

The case was at its most extreme during the by-election fought in Wandsworth a few days ago. It proved to be a triumphant result for the Conservative party. We are all aware that there will be more by-elections. Does it really make sense for the education policy of such a borough to live under the political uncertainty of one by-election after another which in the end—as we are all aware—will be much more a reflection of the national Government's standing than about the local issues involved?

I realise that some boroughs will opt out quickly and, frankly. Which of us would not in their position? However, as some go, the management problems of ILEA will increase. Its overheads will be spread over a narrower base, its best staff will look elsewhere and its recruitment problems will intensify. One could take the narrow view that that is the responsibility and the bad luck of ILEA because it should do its job better. However, it is not enough for the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who is responsible for the standards in the classrooms, to take that narrow view about ILEA. He should see the effect that such a procedure would have on the quality of education as its affects children. That intensifies the argument for addressing the issue.

In the commercial world, no company could properly adopt a policy of allowing an inefficient part of its business simply to drift into terminal decline. There is only one proper approach — to mend or to end. As the Government show no intention and do not seek the power to mend, the only proper approach is to end ILEA.

If we do not do so, we must recognise the effect of the projected poll tax on those constituencies that are covered by ILEA. I do not want to discuss the merits of the poll tax proposals today, but this is the day to recognise the devastating impact on local government finance of allowing ILEA to survive. The Government's own figures for over-spending in the inner-London boroughs show that in the lowest-spending boroughs, such as Kensington and Westminster, the ILEA precept accounts for more than their entire overspend. Of course those boroughs will opt out. However, the London boroughs that are controlled by Opposition parties are much less likely to do so. In four out of the six Opposition boroughs, ILEA's overspend accounts for more than half the entire overspend. Those boroughs have no real power to act on that at the moment.

If the Government really believe that they will win the argument that poll tax levels are ILEA's fault in the constituencies of inner London, they can argue for the voluntary approach. However, I should much prefer to avoid the risk. Even at what I realise is a late hour in the legislative process, I urge my right hon. Friend to think again and to take the simple decision to bring ILEA to an end properly and efficiently. He should do that now, in this Bill, in the early years of this Parliament. That will save money, improve education and avoid one of the most predictable and potentially damaging issues of the next election.

7.32 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): The Bill has already been presented as a successor to the great Education Acts of 1870, 1902 and 1944. On one count, that claim is probably justified because a major reforming education Act is due, if not already overdue. However, as the basis of a new education Act, the Bill fails on two counts to match the credentials of its predecessors. First and foremost, it fails

because those earlier Acts were constructive in purpose and unifying in their application. It is evident in many ways that what the Secretary of State is now proposing is fundamentally destructive and divisive.

Secondly, and in the longer term probably more seriously, the Bill fails because it is without the shared commitment of those interests which have an established and valued part in a service that is vital to the present and future well-being of the country.

That shared commitment or partnership, to use a term that has been used at different times and in other places by the Secretary of State, is conspicuously lacking. However, that was painstakingly built to provide the foundation of the Butler Act. That shared commitment or partnership is lacking for want of consultation and because of imposition. No doubt the Secretary of State will tell us that he has consulted extensively and that, in any case, he is under no obligation to do so.

We should consider the speciousness of those claims. In the flush of his post-June enthusiasm, and on a largely unsuspecting education service, a flood of so-called consultation documents descended. Consultation was thus initiated at virtually the moment when schools and the House of Commons had closed for the long summer recess. Insufficient copies of the consultation documents were supplied to those with a legitimate interest in their proposals and therefore a reason to comment on them; and on a time scale that was ludicrously short given the issues involved and the scant thought that was evidently given to them in the Department of Education and Science papers.

On the last point about time scale, the House may care to reflect on the scale and the length of the consultation process required of local education authorities by the Secretary of State on proposals affecting a single school. It is extensive, elaborate, and takes many months even when done with maximum expedition and effectiveness, and then has to be followed by a statutory period for objections to be made. Bearing in mind that the Secretary of State's proposals affect all the statutory sector of education in England and Wales, it might be thought that it merits rather more than the two months that he afforded for comment on them.

Of course, since he has no duty to consult, the right hon. Gentleman fails to see the wisdom of doing so or at least doing so effectively. The wisdom of genuine consultation is that it provides the opportunity for the thoughts and views of others to be offered, and even adopted. From that process can, and sometimes does, come refinement and improvement of original propositions, benefiting from a wider experience and expertise. Equally important, come those qualities of constructiveness and unification, so conspicuously lacking in the proposed legislation. In the end, if the Secretary of State is so convinced he has the right of all the arguments, and the issues in his Bill, why should he fear a properly structured consultation process?

In the context of previous education Acts, which were major elements of national regeneration, it is therefore worth reflecting on why it is that, besides local education authorities, the Anglican and Catholic Churches; moderate Tory opinion, within and outside LEAs; the Manpower Services Commission; professional organisations, as well as teacher unions; parents' organisations; and many other bodies, and individuals, have all expressed considerable concern. Although that concern has been about time, and the process in relation to consultation, it has been most strongly felt about the substance of what is proposed.

The problem with this, and why such deep concern is so widely felt, is the inherent conflict running through the various proposals now being made, and in relation to other Government policies. This conflict lies between the extremes of rampant consumerism, cellophane-wrapped as increased delegation, greater choice and improved quality, and the need for system-wide coherence and planning of provision to achieve the Audit Commission's three E's of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the socially necessary fourth E of equality—equality, that is, of provision and opportunity.

Let me give some simple illustrations of this conflict arising from the changes proposed. Government policy currently requires LEAs to rationalise school provision, and remove surplus places but, in future, schools will be able to admit virtually without restriction, or to opt out.

To date, on Department of Education and Science targets and figures, local education authorities have removed surpluses, very successfully. A major factor in dealing with falling rolls has been redeployment policies, that have been agreed with teachers. Such policies will be inoperable in the future, and redundancy will become the only option for some teachers. Indeed, one of the main worries in my area is that teachers to whom I speak, who are good teachers with five or six years of service remaining, have said to me, "If the proposals go through, I will take early retirement." That would be a disaster because excellent teachers who have spent a lifetime in the profession educating our young children have now said that they will leave the profession.

I know one teacher very well—I have admired her work for many years—and she is one of those teachers who I thought would have to be literally dragged out of the education service when she reached retirement age. She had got five excellent, effective years to go. However, if this Bill sees its way through the House and is translated into legislation, I am afraid that it will be our loss and her gain because she will be free of the constraints that the Secretary of State has placed upon the education service in the past few years. He is making heavier weather of the education service with this Bill.

I am greatly concerned that LEAs could be taken before employment tribunals for a grievance that they have not caused and could not prevent. Again, power is being taken away from local authorities, but responsibility is being left with them. The LEAs will retain the responsibility of employer, but there will be severe restrictions placed upon their powers to appoint, dismiss, discipline or promote teachers. That will cause great problems.

The LEAs will face rising unit costs as they will lose the opportunity to effect economies of scale with authority-wide purchasing contracts. Indeed, what is worse, they will lose that opportunity if schools opt out in the proportion referred to by the Prime Minister. Indeed, the House is aware that the Prime Minister is far more ambitious regarding the opt-out proposals than the Secretary of State.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Nobody is more ambitious than the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. Friend is talking about a different matter, but I agree.

[Mr. Lewis]

Given the predictable continuation of Government policy to reduce local authority budgets, the ability of LEAs to sustain schools that remain in the locally provided system will be even more difficult. What will happen then to standards, parental choice, equal opportunities and parity of esteem?

Earlier I referred to the cellophane wrapping that is dressing up rampant consumerism. I said that this Bill represents a narrow, self-defeating philosophy that puts human needs and individual worth in second place behind competitive materialism. Part of that wrapping is represented by the cynical overkill of greater parental choice and power. I ask the House, better still the Secretary of State: where is the true evidence to show what parents want? I suspect that, at present, most LEAs are able to demonstrate that, in their areas, more than 90 per cent. of parents obtain their first preference of school for their children.

Equally, the first-hand experience of elected members of LEAs from all parties—now supported by research evidence—shows that parents have no compelling wish to run schools. Parents are interested in their children's education, not the exercise of constitutional power. That interest leads them to seek a greater understanding of, and involvement in, the process of education and to seek opportunities for working alongside teachers.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in his area and mine, the legislation will drive out the dedicated teachers who run the schools and will leave parent governors to deal with often inadequate staff because professionalism as such will be thrown into the waste paper basket?

Mr. Lewis: My hon. Friend is my Member of Parliament, but I must say that I do not believe that there are that many bad teachers in the area which we represent and in which we live. However, I believe that my hon. Friend has picked up what I said earlier: the good dedicated career teachers who have few years left in the education service will be the ones who go. That will leave the Government with the problems to which my hon. Friend has referred.

I have said that involvement in the process of education and the opportunity for working alongside teachers will be denied to parents if this Bill becomes law. Most of all and quite properly, parents are concerned to see that their children have the best opportunities and achieve the best possible standards. The Government's proposals fail to demonstrate, clearly and convincingly, how those real wishes of parents will be met.

The Government readily invent their own wishes for parents and they seek to meet them by a set of contrivances built on a series of false premises. They conveniently ignore evidence contrary to their preconceptions and prejudices. That is equally evident in the Government's curriculum proposals.

I shall skip some of my speech because I am conscious that many hon. Members want to speak. The Bill contains elements that provide a basis on which a constructive and unifying reform of our national education system could be undertaken. However, it is the specific proposals that give effect to those broad concepts that will cause dissent and disruption. Those specific proposals contain the true agenda of the proposed legislation.

The proposals will fragment the education service. They will inhibit, if not prevent, LEAs from providing a public service organised on a planned, coherent and equitable base, because, in their error and blindness, the Government insist that market forces provide a better basis for a public service than partnership between community, locally elected representatives and the professionals that they employ. It may well be that that partnership needs reconstructing and redefining — in those terms, reform is probably necessary. However the unavoidable and all too evident fact that remains is that the proposals described in the Bill have, in truth, little to do with reforming education or national regeneration. They have everything to do with the vindictive vendetta that the Government are conducting against public services and locally elected authorities.

7.47 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): This has been a remarkable debate—one of the most remarkable that I have ever had the good fortune to sit through. So far, three Privy Councillors have addressed the House and three more are like to do so before we vote.

I believe that the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) took far too gloomy a view of the Bill. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman displayed a degree of selectivity that would be envied by anyone taking the 11-plus or 12-plus. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber—suggested in an article in the *Sunday Times* last weekend that the word "local" was acceptable only if it prefixed the word "authority". He should remember, when he talks about power and education, that this Bill gives more power to schools and provides a better education for the nation's children. The hon. Gentleman should remember that the word "local" applies not only to authorities but to schools and parents.

If the education provided by LEAs was of such quality, the hon. Member for Blackburn should ask why the former leader of the Labour party, James Callaghan, started the great debate on education at Ruskin College back in 1976. That point was well made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his opening speech today.

I suspect that the real justification for this Bill comes from a set of statistics published last week, which showed that 6 million of our fellow countrymen cannot read, write or do simple arithmetic after 11 years of compulsory education. When the hon. Member for Blackburn talks about a lust for power and a vendetta against local government, he should recall that such rhetoric will not help our children to read. We want good, sound education, and the Bill will ensure that.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: I shall not give way. Many other hon. Members wish to speak.

I come to the part of the Bill that deals with schools. To maximise the Bill's effects, we need the co-operation of the teaching force. I have said before, and I repeat it now, that the majority of teachers in this country are dedicated to their profession and to the children in their charge. That is why I welcomed the 16·4 per cent. increase in pay that was awarded to teachers this year. It shows two things —how far teachers' pay had slipped behind; and how much we were determined to do about it. We recognise the value and importance of the teacher force in the United

Kingdom. I am anxious that the Bill should be received by teachers with an open mind, and that any lingering misgivings that may be left over from previous disagreements should be put on one side in the interests of the nation's children in teachers' charge. Those are the criteria against which the Bill should be judged.

It has been suggested that there is no necessity for the radical reforms in the Bill, and that all that was required was an increase of resources. Would that that were true. Despite what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said, since 1979 we have increased the level of resources in England by 11 per cent. to £7·8 billion, and spending per pupil is up by a massive 31 per cent.

More resources do not necessarily equal better education. One has only to look at ILEA to see the truth of that. Radical reform is necessary; the Government have a responsibility to the nation. They would be failing in their duty if they did not try to reform education. As some education authorities seem incapable of improving the education service, Government must. The additional powers that Government are taking at the centre are balanced by the additional powers that are being given to parents. The combination of parents and Government will ensure that the Bill meets the educational challenge.

I welcome first the fact that the national curriculum will not be hewn on tablets of stone, but will be rather more flexible than was first envisaged. The time allotted to the foundation subjects will not be laid down by statute, and it will be for individual schools to decide how much is spent on each of them, with the safeguard of assessment and tests at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16. If a child begins to fall behind, that will be recognised early so that appropriate action can be taken to ensure that the child's work improves and that he keeps pace with his peers. Incidentally, those benchmarks will also be a useful reference for parents. Surely parents, too, have a right to know just how well their child is doing in school?

The second provision to which I want to refer is that of open enrolment, which goes back to my earlier point about giving added responsibility to parents. In the main, parents know best what is right for their children. They have a great deal more common sense than they are sometimes given credit for, and by means of HMI reports and school prospectuses they already know which school in their locality provides the level of education that is appropriate to their son or daughter. The Bill merely extends that right and choice. One of the more annoying features of LEA control has been the way in which authorities have deliberately prevented good, popular schools from accepting more children. That stumbling block will be removed and schools, within certain limits, will be called on to take children up to their 1979 level.

My third point concerns financial delegation to schools, which represents a movement of power from LEAs to heads, governors and parents. It ensures that power and responsibility is shared. Instead of a chief education officer and his fellow bureaucrats at shire hall deciding policy, as is often the case, the responsibility for school policy will be placed in the hands of individual schools. They will be allocated a budget and be able to decide their own priorities. That will make schools much more accountable to parents and local communities, and will ensure a better use of resources.

I ask my right hon. Friend to note three areas of concern. First, heads should receive better training for the job that they will be called upon to do. I ask my right hon. Friend to re-examine the staff college concept. Heads require additional training to assist them in the running of schools. Secondly, larger schools should consider — perhaps with an adjoining school—the appointment of a bursar who can handle the day-to-day administration. Thirdly, governors should be better trained to have better knowledge of their powers and duties.

My final point has to do with the introduction of grant-maintained schools. I think that few schools will wish to take advantage of that option. But if great numbers of schools decide to leave the present system, that would be a massive vote of no confidence in what is now being provided. If a system is so bad that large numbers wish to leave it, it must surely be better for our children's education that they do so. That is the justification for the Bill. If a school opts out, it will provide a benchmark against which schools that remain in the system can be judged.

The Bill is radical. It represents major and necessary reform. It would have been relatively easy for my right hon. and hon. Friends to introduce a series of cosmetic measures that were designed merely to paper over the education cracks. That would have been safe, but certainly not sound; safe, but grossly inadequate. It is a tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends that they have deliberately not sought an easy or uncontroversial way forward. Instead, they have gone for great reform, which will be to the substantial advantage of the nation's children for the rest of this century and into the years beyond.

7.58 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I disagree strongly with the analysis of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). This is not a major reformist Bill. In the history of educational administration it will be seen as crudely revisionist and instrumentalist.

The history of educational reform has been neglected in this debate. Pupils were subjected to tests in reading, writing and arithmetic that were administered by HMI. That was the first centralist innovation in education policy, in 1862. Those of us who were taught our history of education in the university of Wales — and who remember it—realise that we are witnessing a return not only to Victorian values, but to the same type of authoritarian approach to pupils and children as existed in those days. We are only waiting for the Secretary of State to announce that he is deducting 2s.8d. from the grant to each school for each pupil failing the test, fully to institute the payment by results method, which was abolished in 1895. However, its centralist regulations continued until 1936 and was finally abolished in the 1944 Act. We can see quite clearly in the history of education administration how centralisation and decentralisation vie with each other.

All the criticisms in education history of the payment by results policy apply to this Bill. They demean education and reduce it to a cramming exercise and to the recall capacity of pupils. They circumscribe the professional activity of teachers and constrain initiative and the curriculum is narrowed. The policy was aptly described by Gordon Kirk in his recent book on the core curriculum. He said that it introduced a state-controlled curriculum and was

"the deliberate use of political power to mould the minds of the young".

[Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas]

That is how this revisionist measure will be understood in future.

I also blame the Labour party for initiating the so-called great debate in 1976. I am also critical of the approach to the so-called national curriculum endorsed by the official Opposition. We believe in a decentralised education policy and that curriculum development is a matter of partnership between the Welsh Office or the Department of Education and Science, the local education authorities, the Welsh Joint Education Committee and the successor body to the Schools Council that the Government had to invent after they destroyed the valuable work of that council.

In the major document that the Schools Council produced on the whole matter of the curriculum, it said: "each school should have the fullest measure of responsibility for its own curriculum and teaching methods, based on the needs of its own pupils and evolved by its own staff". That sums up what curriculum development should be about. That is why we are completely opposed to the whole notion of a core curriculum and the imposition of a central curriculum. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and other hon. Members have said, the centralisation by the Government is a long way from the "secret garden" of the curriculum described by the former Tory Education Minister, David Eccles. It is a central prescription for forms of knowledge from the Government. The prescription is narrow, not just in the sense of the centralisation imposed by the Bill, but in the naming of school subjects in a piece of legislation—a bizarre innovation—and also in terms of the approach to the curriculum.

The definition of subjects runs contrary to all the approaches that have been followed in curriculum development over the past 30 years. The whole notion that one can divide and package the curriculum into subjects cuts out the trans-curriculum approach that has been so useful in schools. It also goes entirely against all the major reports that have studied the subject area. In that context one thinks of "A language for life" and the Bullock report, which stressed the importance of language development across the curriculum. One thinks also of Cockcroft and "Mathematics Counts" which stressed the importance of numerical skills across the curriculum or the learning of science across the curriculum and the cognitive and the affective skills of pupils as they are defined in education study. These are cross-curricular skills that have to be developed and the notion of a package subject runs contrary to that.

Her Majesty's inspectorate has shown that in the development in primary schools of, for example, science teaching it is the understanding of technology and science on a cross-curricular basis that provides the best attainment for pupils. As it is conceived, the national curriculum threatens a reduction in the standards of mathematics and literacy, because it may well lead to the isolation of these so-called subjects from the rest of the curriculum. That is why we need to be able to see the relevance for pupils of the so-called subjects to the rest of their social skills and their social life. That is why I stress to the Secretary of State that he should abandon this subject approach and take the much more rational modular approach to the content of his curriculum. That modular approach takes in the kind of jargon that was once used by HMI in its reports in the 1970s and early 1980s, before HMI was got at as part of the centralisation process of the education policy that the Government are pursuing.

We need to look at ways of approaching the curriculum that recognise diversity in the schools and which gives the opportunity for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum. It can be seen quite clearly from studies produced by, for example, the Welsh Joint Examining Board, that the standards of student performance are improved where one has a modular approach. It also seems to be clear from the attainment by female pupils that they more easily adapt to the short-term modules in the curriculum.

It is much more easy to adopt to vocational experience when one has a modular approach rather than a subject-based approach. I stress to the Government that they need to review their whole approach in order to prevent a narrowing of the curriculum. When one reads HMI advice over the last 10 years, one sees a recommendation that there should be a reduction in the number of examinable subjects, and that we should not have the notion of subject-based knowledge being proliferated within the curriculum.

We should look for areas of experience that include the personal and social development of pupils. That is the kind of thing that cannot be prescribed in a subject-based core curriculum. Surely social skills are just as important for the industralist—the Conservatives support the interests of the industralist—as are the notions of narrow subjects. There is also a danger that some of the gains that have been made in vocational education, particularly on the training and vocational education initiative, may be undermined by this approach of a subject-led core curriculum.

Not only do we need to look at the general needs of pupils, but we need to look at pupils who have special education needs. What has been achieved for pupils with special education needs in terms of integration into the curriculum and into schools is endangered by this kind of prescribed so-called national curriculum. It will be a residual curriculum that will be available for pupils if the measures are pressed forward. As I have said, the same thing applies to attempts to ensure gender equality in the education system in the provision of courses that are attractive to female pupils as well as to male pupils.

The other approach that is undermined by this subject-led curriculum is the commitment that is apparently in the rhetoric of the Government but never in the practice, to education for a multi-cultural society. We have had the "Education for All" study under the chairmanship of Lord Swann. That has been neglected by the Government and this approach of a subject-based curriculum will prevent the sort of innovations in multicultural education that we require.

Finally, I turn to Wales. This curriculum is called a national curriculum. But whose national curriculum is it? Apparently it is a national curriculum for England, although from looking at the submissions from the English LEA's one can see very little demand for it. I can tell the Secretary of State for Education and Science in England and the Minister of State with responsibility for education in Wales that there is no demand whatever for the provisions of this Bill—either the opt-out provision or the so-called national curriculum provision — by the LEAs in Wales.

This is an English national curriculum that is not wanted by English people and it is to be imposed on Wales. That is clearly shown when we look at the complexity that has arisen when the Government have tried to deal with Welsh in the core curriculum. They have invented a new building called the Welsh-speaking school and in the legislation they are attempting to impose a centralised solution on the linguistic diversity in Wales. I make it quite clear that we reject that centralist Welsh language core curriculum. The diversity of linguistic provision should be provided by the local education authorities responding sensitively to the needs of their areas.

It is nonsense for the Government to invent a Curriculum Council for Wales while not providing Wales with a schools examination and assessment council. If the whole point of the curriculum is to set up a structure of knowledge that is to be assessed, surely it makes sense to assess through a separate schools examination and assessment council for Wales, which would operate alongside the Curriculum Council. I welcome what slipped into the Secretary of State's speech about the creation of a sub-committee of the new Universities Funding Council covering Wales. We have been campaigning on this issue for a long time and there will be a great welcome in the educational establishment and the university of Wales for this proposal.

There is no polytechnics and colleges funding council for Wales and that points to the anomalous position of the Welsh education system. It is high time that the Secretary of State — albeit he originally hailed from Newport — divested himself of his responsibility for the whole of post-16 education in Wales. Indeed, he should divest himself of his responsibilities for the whole of Welsh education and they should be devolved to the current holder of the office of Secretary of State for Wales. The Bill is not relevant to Welsh education, and we shall seek to remove its application to Wales. I hope that we can also remove the Bill from the statute book, to ensure that education in England returns to the mainstream——

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would prefer Welsh not to be in the core curriculum for Wales, or not to be a foundation subject in Wales? Will he make himself clear?

Dr. Thomas: I have already made it clear that I do not endorse the notion of a core curriculum. The linguistic diversity of Wales is, I believe, best catered for by local education authorities, supported by the Welsh Joint Education Committee and other central initiatives. When the Minister examines the position during the Committee stage, I am sure that he will see exactly what the position is.

I apologise for the length of my speech, Madam Deputy Speaker; it was caused by the Minister's intervention.

8.10 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): A number of speakers from both sides of the House have touched on the interests of the Churches in the Bill. In my capacity as the Second Church Estates Commissioner, I should like to convey briefly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State both plaudits and one or two anxieties and queries raised with me by the Church of England board of education. As my right hon. Friend fully realises, many maintained schools are voluntary schools, the ownership of which lies with trustees, and the Church of England features prominently in that regard.

I welcome the Bill. I begin by thanking my right hon. Friend, on behalf of the Church authorities, for clause 1(2), with its outstandingly bold and uninhibited formulation calling for the promotion of the spiritual, moral and cultural development of children at school. That has done much to reassure many of those outside Parliament who, in their early responses to the consultation papers, feared that certain aspects of a broad and balanced curriculum were not sufficiently emphasised. As it stands, clause 1(2) appears to be stronger than the well-known section in the Education Act 1944 which defined the purposes of the statutory system of education. That is to be warmly welcomed.

I am also grateful for the assurances that my right hon. Friend has given to those who have made representations to him in the cause of religious education. I hope that he will consider giving specific expression to those assurances by finding a way of strengthening still further the references to religious education in the Bill, along lines which could be adjusted in detail in Committee.

I say that because, having congratulaed my right hon. Friend on strengthening certain aspects of the 1944 Act in the Bill, I must express some regret at what appears to be an area of weaker formulation. For example, it is a pity that, by appearing rather late in chapter V, which deals with miscellaneous items, the clause on school worship — clause 79 — is separated from any reference to religious education as such. Incidentally, reference earlier in the Bill to religious education is modest enough, tucked away as it is in a "sub-subsection" — clause 6(1)*(c)*. However, I am content to regard its modest size as akin to that of the proverbial mustard seed, capable of astonishing powers of accommodation.

Section 25 of the 1944 Act set an important precedent by linking religious instruction and worship under the general heading of religious education. I believe that there are good educational grounds for keeping to that earlier arrangement, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider reuniting elements that seem to have been unnecessarily divorced.

I feel that greater clarification is needed of the position of religious education and worship in the proposed grant-maintained schools. Chapter IV is a complex and densely drafted part of the Bill, and I know that advisers to the General Synod board of education believe that amendments will be required in the course of the Bill's progress. I understand that the board is seeking to discuss certain aspects of this part of the Bill with the Department of Education and Science and the Charity Commissioners, and will be writing in the near future to identify the practice areas of concern in the hope that certain amendments can be agreed.

In that connection, it is important that the protection that was afforded to denominational voluntary aided schools in the 1944 Act is carried over and preserved in the Bill in respect of a voluntary school that becomes a grant-maintained school. I know that my right hon. Friend has given assurances on the matter, but I understand that the General Synod board feels that changes are still needed. There are also many questions about the applicability of agreed syllabuses to former county and controlled schools that become grant maintained.

[Mr. Michael Alison]

Let me turn briefly to a narrower but no less urgent point. It is well known that the assets of voluntary schools within the maintained system are considerable, and are held upon charitable trusts subject to Charity Commission jurisdiction. If any such schools become grant-maintained, the charitable trust continues. However, the Bill as drafted is far from satisfactory in the arrangements set out for liquidating the assets of a closed grant-maintained school that originated as a voluntary school. The board of education fears that insufficient regard is paid to trustees in the arrangements outlined in chapter IV.

In the case of the Church of England, that applies particularly to diocesan education committees. They have, after all, a status accorded by secondary legislation in the shape of the Diocesan Education Committee Measure 1955, and also in the trusteeship provision of the Education Act 1973. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree to continuing exchanges between the relevant officials in the course of clarification and, ultimately, adequate clarity and fairness in the Bill.

The Bill is an instrument of exciting and far-reaching reform. Let it never be said that the Church of England —a Church of the Reformation—is laggard when it comes to supporting worthwhile reform, and the attempt to extend parental choice in education is one of the boldest and novel innovations proposed in the Bill. Few people, I imagine, would wish to oppose the object of maximising parental choice. I certainly do not; nor does the Church of England, offering as it does a choice in education.

However, as that objective is so desirable, we must try to make the means to it infallible—or, at least, as close to infallible as possible. The Church of England board of education believes that there are grounds for worrying about the precise arrangement proposed for parental ballot in chapter IV of the Bill.

Fears have also been expressed in some Church circles about the possible impact of any widespread establishment of grant-maintained schools on remaining LEA services for LEA-maintained schools. I also feel that the Bill could, with advantage, be clearer about the afrangements under which grant-maintained schools admit pupils, given the arrangements in chapter II applying to county and voluntary schools.

It might be helpful for chapter II to contain some mention of the School Premises Regulations 1981, to make it clear that the imposition of the 1979 standard number will not jeopardise any desirable improvement to the premises that are carried out to meet the requirements of those regulations. However, that is a Committee point—and an appropriate point at which to conclude my remarks.

I wish the Bill every success. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree to allow a continuing dialogue with the Church authorities as the Bill proceeds through Committee and we come to the later provisions.

8.19 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): As the debate proceeds it becomes ever clearer that the Bill has nothing to do with choice, freedom, standards or any of the rhetoric we have heard from Conservative Members but has everything to do with the application of a toxic mixture of free market ideas and centralism to our education system.

I wish that the right hon. Members concerned were present to hear me say this, but it is interesting to see how far the divisions have opened up among the Conservative Members in the different positions people are taking. There are divisions not only among those who modestly support the Bill but between those who oppose the Bill.

For example, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) wants more of the toxic mixture. He wants more centralism and more central urgent action as a way of tackling the free market damage of the Bill. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) wants to draw back from the application of free market ideas and centralism. The spectacle of Conservative Members baying at their former leader and Prime Minister was an unattractive aspect of the Conservative party and it makes one wonder where Conservative Members have been educated.

Conservative Members have used the issue of standards in the crudest possible way as a smokescreen for the Government's real motives, which arise from a petulant vendetta against local authorities and the Government's well-documented suspicion of the diversity and innovation that Rab Butler saw as a positive and integral part of the Education Act 1944. It has been said many times that the Government know the price of everything and the value of nothing. This Bill, I am afraid, is just one more disastrous example of their indulgence of competition in everything, except in free ideas. What we see before us is a highly centralist measure.

My hon. Friends have already exposed the fraudulence of the claims about parental choice. They have exposed the damage that open enrolment and opting out would cause. Instead of bringing in this damaging Bill, the Government should be ensuring that the best local education strategies, which are very good and are currently being applied in many counties and metropolitan areas, are applied more generally. They ought to be requiring local authorities to show what progress they have made in raising education standards and extending opportunities. They ought to be developing external validation of the policies and progress of individual schools and making the resources available to enable schools and teachers to get on with their job.

I say that the Government ought to be doing those things, but I know one reason why they are not. They do not have a clue what is happening over that broad area of education. Lectures on education standards from Conservative Members are insufferable at the best of times, but the credibility of the Secretary of State would be considerably enhanced if he knew how local authorities were performing. In the past nine years, no team of civil servants, inspectors or Ministers has bothered to visit Oxfordshire, my local education authority area, to review as a whole the authority's education plans and achievements. Can Conservative Members think of any successful organisation anywhere else that would ignore what was going on in the local areas? If Conservative Members are really interested in raising standards, they should be monitoring and improving the good practice in many local education authorities, such as Oxfordshire.

Survey after survey has shown that parents and non-parents fully appreciate the importance of those points and want to see more resources invested in our schools. However, because that does not agree with the Conservative party's ideological preconceptions of public expenditure, a deaf ear is turned to the pleas of parents for more books, equipment and investment in our schools.

The power placed in the hands of the Secretary of State in this Bill is truly frightening. It centralises and politicises what is taught in schools and is incompatible with notions of genuine parental choice or locally sensitive and democratic planning. It is clear that the Government have, as in so many other areas of their policies, abandoned any attempt to proceed through consultation, rational persuasion or partnership with those on the ground, be they head teachers, parent governors, teaching staff or councillors, who will have to put the proposals into effect if by any mischance the Bill becomes law. The best we can hope for is that those good people with their good record of work will succeed in damage limitation and rescue the Government from the consequences of their crass mismanagement, even if the more sensible members of the Tory party do not.

I am particularly worried that a principal casualty of all this will be the especially important stage of education between 16 and 19 years old. If the Bill is passed, it will at best frustrate and at worst block rational planning of provision at that level and stop progress to tertiary colleges, because opting out, as some hon. Members have said, would be most attractive where secondary schools face problems of falling rolls and pursue grant-maintained status as a means of avoiding reorganisation or closure. The ensuing chaos would not only set back progress to higher standards at that level of education but would hinder the attainment of the numbers of suitably qualified entrants to higher education, which I should have thought that all of us in the House would want to see, for the sake of our country's future.

On the matter of higher education, one of the most pernicious clauses in this thoroughly pernicious Bill is clause 94, which empowers the Secretary of State to make grants to the funding councils

"subject to such conditions as he may determine."

That imposes a statutory requirement on the funding councils to

"comply with any directions given to them by the Secretary of State."

Taken together with the power in clauses 92 and 93, it amounts to direct control of the activities of polytechnics and universities by the Secretary of State. Whatever protests the academic institutions may make, they would be powerless in law to resist the Secretary of State. That is dangerous, draconian and wholly incompatible with the principles of academic freedom that all of us in the House should be pledged to uphold.

One may ask whether the university and polytechnic funding councils will offer some protection or operate as a buffer between academic institutions and the power of the state. No, they will not, because each power they exercise is entirely dependent upon the Secretary of State's judgment. Remember they must comply with "any directions" that he gives them. They are appointed by him and can be dismissed by him. People with integrity and independence will be discouraged from serving on them. They would be mere pawns of the Secretary of State, rubber-stamping the Government's line.

I know that the Secretary of State has offered assurances that the funding councils will be able to advise him on the needs of the universities and polytechnics. However, the absence of any such obligation in the Bill renders the Secretary of State's words utterly unconvincing. Why should it not be a clear duty for the funding councils to report on the needs of the institutions? Could it be that the Secretary of State is afraid of what they will tell him if they were obliged by law to undertake that important task? I fear so. As it stands, the Bill means that advisory bodies will become mere transmission belts.

As chairman of the governors of Oxford polytechnic, I am interested in the Bill's practical implications for polytechnics. The transitional arrangements to which the Secretary of State referred give rise to all sorts of worries and fears about what will happen if polytechnics are led to opt out of the local authority framework. The Secretary of State promises £9 million. However, if that sum is divided between the institutions, it works out at only £85,000 per polytechnic, which will come nowhere near to covering the costs of computing, equipment, specialist staff and the financial administration input that will be needed not only on vesting day but ahead of vesting day if the transition is not to be a fiasco.

The polytechnics need assurances from the Secretary of State that the Treasury will not operate the financial arrangements in a limited way. At the moment, our polytechnics can carry forward overspending or underspending on any particular budget head from one year to the next. There is no mad rush to spend up on the last day of the financial year. We seek an assurance that the flexibility that the polytechnics have gained under local authority control will not be lost if the Bill goes through and the transition takes place.

One can draw only one conclusion about the rational planning and management of further and higher education. It would have been far better if the Government had followed the advice of their own report "Management for a Purpose" and established corporate status within the local authority framework. The Government paid £350,000 for that report and they have thrown it in the waste paper basket. That would have had the overwhelming advantage of facilitating the sensible co-ordination and planning of further adult and continuing education as well as bringing all the schools within the local authority framework.

The Bill puts much of value at risk for no discernible benefit other than the advancement of the Government's vicious vendetta against local democracy and local authorities. That is the central theme of the Bill, which gives the Secretary of State unprecedented statutory powers to intervene in and interfere with the running of education at every point. Whatever the Secretary of State says in his rhetoric about freedom and choice, the Bill represents rampant centralisation. It places in the hands of the central state authorities powers that seem all too likely to result in untold damage being inflicted on education and on our children and young people.

There is no sense of balance in the Bill and no sense that academic and professional judgments or local voters' choices are to count for anything. The Bill is centralist and stuffed full of impracticalities and half-baked ideas. It would serve our children and our country badly, and it must be defeated.

8.33 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Brevity seems to be the core curriculum for the debate, so I shall be as brief as possible on a couple of aspects of the Bill rather than doing the usual tour d'horizon of the education scene.

Before I came to this place as the Member for Battersea I served for a term as education chairman in the London borough of Kingston. During that time, we were able to

[Mr. John Bowis]

introduce an experiment on financial delegation. Although I did not stay long enough to see the benefits of that come to fruition, I have been back since to check up on the results. I was impressed to find that one school has been redecorated and has refitted its science laboratory on the basis of savings from heating, lighting and so on. That is a small example of what financial delegation can do. It is clear that without such experiments and without the expansion of such experiments, there is no incentive to save. Even if the incentive had been there and the school had made the effort, the savings would not have benefited the school but merely have come back into the central pot. That is an important reason why the financial delegation provisions are greatly to be welcomed.

I wish to discuss, slightly less briefly, but not for too long, the question of the Inner London education authority. I listened carefully to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is tempted to buy his line, I shall buy it too. The abolition of ILEA would be to the general benefit of mankind — particularly mankind in inner London.

Let me put that in a local context. ILEA is a heavy-spending authority and a heavily under-achieving authority. It is bottom of the league and bottom of the class. ILEA as a whole is bad enough, but my division is worse. In ILEA we are not named, we have divisions. My borough of Wandsworth is division 10 of ILEA. Division 10's results are below average even for ILEA, which is itself bottom of the national league. It is not surprising——

Mr. Straw: Which league is the hon. Gentleman referring to? The Sheffield university study of local education authorities put ILEA 56th out of 104 authorities.

Mr. Bowis: I am talking in terms of academic results and results as seen by local parents.

There are two exceptions in division 10, both of which are Church schools and I receive many letters from parents seeking to get their children into those voluntary-aided schools. In division 10, 25 per cent. of children go into band 1 secondary schools and 52 per cent. go to band 2 schools. We are below average in terms of the number of pupils needing free school meals and the number who are not fluent in English, so we are not a particularly disadvantaged area. Our results should be a bit above average, yet only 17 per cent. of our pupils are entered for five or more O-levels and only 9 per cent. leave school with five or more O-levels or CSE grade 1 passes, compared with 15 per cent. for ILEA as a whole and 24 per cent. for the national average.

Let us put the figures another way. The national average for children leaving with no exam passes is 9·9 per cent; in ILEA the figure is 22 per cent. That is why our division and many other divisions of ILEA want to make the change. Above all, it is to improve standards that Wandsworth wants to run its own schools for its own people. If we can get the opting-out system going and establish a national curriculum, we shall begin to make sense of our education.

The Audit Commission poll showed considerable dissatisfaction with local schools and with value for money in education. There was three times as much dissatisfaction in the ILEA area. The dissatisfaction relates more to secondary than to primary schools but it is there for both. People are more dissatisfied with education than with any other service anywhere in the country, with the exception of inner-London council housing. Furthermore, local employers complain that they cannot find adequately educated school leavers to fill jobs. We must find ways of improving our education system to solve that problem, with its implications for employment as a whole.

The only place in which ILEA's results stack up against the national average is not a school in division 10 or in divisions 1 to 9 but Wolverstone hall boarding school, which was on television recently. The school is run by a former master from Westminster school and its costs are somewhat more expensive than those of Eton, but that is the fault of management costs and not the school itself. Instead of seeking to reduce the management costs of such a school, ILEA seeks to close it. That sums up ILEA's ethos.

Wandsworth's track record in local government suggests that we could and would pare down administrative costs, but, more important, we would increase the real extra spending at the sharp end of the service — that is, the chalk face. Boroughs such as Wandsworth, which run their own education systems, would be more sensitive to the needs of the local community — the community of children, parents and employers. There would not be just six representatives from our part of London trying to make their voices heard in county hall, but 61 local councillors, all involved in education, sensitive to local opinion, taking political decisions and listening.

There are many scare stories going around ILEA at the moment, not least in respect of adult education. I get letter after letter from people saying what a shame it is that Wandsworth is going to take over adult education. Adult education will be abolished. I received a letter from a student asking whether I was aware that adult education tutors were distributing notepaper and pens and giving them the text to write to me and others. One needs to be aware that scare stories are going around. The reality is in the pledge from our local council leader in Wandsworth that adult education will certainly have high priority. The reality also exists in the Secretary of State's guarantee. He would not accept an opting-out scheme that did not cater adequately for adult education. The same applies to all the other facilities about which people are concerned.

It may be that when boroughs opt out, they will not go it totally alone. Two or three boroughs may share facilities, and that will be for the benefit of all. It is true that there will be greater co-operation within boroughs. There will be dual use of facilities such as halls, sports grounds, libraries, and so on.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose——*

Mr. Bowis: I shall not give way. I am bringing my remarks to a close so that more hon. Members can speak. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I shall give way another time, but I am told that we are looking for brevity.

The answer is to let boroughs run their own schools. As has been said, we had a bye-election, which more than

tested that point. The Labour party spent the entire by-election talking about it. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was seen more often in Southfields than in this Chamber. He dashed around all over the place. At the end of the day, when the votes were counted, the hon. Gentleman came, he saw, and we doubled our majority. That is the message that we should give with the Bill. Let us give it.

8.42 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. We on this Bench have often been welcomed back to the House but it is amazing how, when it comes to that which appears to be business for Great Britain, we are left out, despite the fact that the Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland who deals with education has actually said that he will introduce an order under the Bill. That will occur under the iniquitous system whereby we cannot debate or amend legislation.

I was interested in the comments of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), the Second Church Estates Commissioner, about the religious and moral emphasis of the Bill. It is amazing how the myth that parents have choice is still perpetuated. For example, in Northern Ireland, when parents objected to the problem relating to school textbooks, they were stonewalled right along the line because of the Northern Ireland council that sets such books. That attitude will prevail right down the line with this Bill.

People have been led to believe that there will be choice, but, when it comes to the coal face, there will be no real choice. In fact, when the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) spoke, I suspected that at least some people on the Opposition side thought that the only choice would come about as a result of vandalism. Apparently, that has happened during the right hon. Gentleman's new incarnation and has opened the field for competition. I suspect that that problem may face us in connection with education, which some believe will be changed by the vandalism of this Bill.

I welcome the Bill in so far as it extends to Great Britain, but I emphasise that circumstances that justify action to improve standards in Great Britain may not apply to Northern Ireland. If hon. Members care to examine the statistics that were given to me by the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) on 9 November and by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science on 16 November, they will discover that, whereas the pupil-teacher ratio in England is 17·6 per cent., in Belfast it is 17 per cent. That is not a big difference. The pass rate for those who leave with more than one A-level is 14 per cent. in England and 23·6 per cent. in Northern Ireland. We in Northern Ireland do not want reformation that will lower the standards that have been maintained over the years.

I sympathise with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He paid tribute to teachers generally. I support that, but there is no way that school government or management committees can know the teachers' teaching qualities, especially those who apply for first appointment. After appointment, it is difficult to remove bad teachers. Having been on a local management committee for 19 years, I have discovered that we are not allowed to know teachers' gradings. We might know everything else, but not that. I suspect that the Bill will not make any difference in that respect. I disagree with the hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup when he said that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is the most powerful man in the Government. The most powerful man in the Government is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Even when we ask questions of the Attorney-General, we are sidetracked to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

There is concern in the university in my constituency. I do not share the delight that was expressed by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), who welcomed the advent of a sub-committee to deal with funding. Our experience in Northern Ireland in the University Grants Committee make one decision, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland makes another, and, at times, neither is right.

8.47 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I am aware of the need for brevity, so I shall not refer to any other part of the Bill apart from that which deals with schooling, and I shall do so briefly. I welcome many of the Bill's provisions.

Increased parental choice and open enrolment, to which other hon. Members have referred, are vital. We believe, unlike certain Opposition Members, that parents can choose better than local government advisers. By being able to choose, they will enhance their understanding of the system and have a pride in what they do. The more parental choice there is, the better schools and families we shall have. If the family—the parents and children—agree with the school that they attend, there will be unity within the whole.

Similarly, I agree with the delegation of funds to be performed by schools. A school that can meet together under its head and decide where to spend its money will be a better school. Money will be better spent. It will be spent not where a local authority thinks that it should be spent or where the Government think that it should be spent. Schools know the local circumstances, and money will go much further if there is delegation of that type.

I agree also with the break-up of ILEA. The old London county council was one of the finest local education authorities in the world. When I first came to London it was highly respected, but unfortunately ILEA never took the same stance as that taken by the LCC, nor had the dignity of the LCC. I believe that the breaking down of education from ILEA to boroughs will be better. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) that, instead of boroughs dropping out one by one, it may be a good idea to deal with them in a fell swoop so that they can go out together. We cannot have boroughs dropping out of ILEA each year, like a jigsaw puzzle which falls to bits and can never be put back together again. That suggestion should be borne in mind.

Further improvement could be made on one or two points. I am glad that the common curriculum will be more flexible. I believe in a core curriculum—not a common curriculum — which has a minimum requirement of English, mathematics and other subjects which all children can do. I do not like the specification that all children, from the most able to the least able, should do the same number of lessons on the same curriculum. That is the ultimate egalitarian comprehensive curriculum which I do not want. I am pleased that more flexibility is coming in.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

I follow what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on religious education. I realise that religious education is provided for at the beginning of the Bill, but I should like to see it as a foundation or core subject. I believe that man's knowledge of his place in the universe and the purpose of his life is more important even than English and maths. These days we have more moral than political problems, and many political problems would go away if we could solve the moral problems. I should like to see RE as a foundation or core subject.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that no school will operate at its best unless and until religious education is properly handled, well taught and at the centre of school life?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have great respect for my hon. Friend, who is a neighbour and is the first hon. Member I met outside the House because he taught at the school at which I was head in the east end of London. I will not say that a school led by agnostics with agnostic staff could not be a good school, but in most cases a school will be better if it has religious unity and feeling.

We should settle for all time the amount of money given to voluntary aided schools. There were the old battles—I do not remember them, but we have all read of them—of the liberal attitude of the Liberal party in putting Government funds into non-denominational schools. Government funding is 85 per cent. now—a rise from 75 per cent. since I have been in the House. As voluntary aided schools are already funded by grants, they should be given 100 per cent. funding for building costs. The parents pay their rates and taxes like everybody else, and since parental contributions enhance voluntary aided schools, the time has come for the Government to fund building costs 100 per cent., like everybody else.

I hope all secondary schools opt out, if parents want to. I would like to see schools in my constituency opt out. Primary schools may opt out only if they have more than 300 pupils, but small village schools may wish to opt out. When I was a Minister, delegation after delegation made representations for the preservation of village schools.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Hear, hear.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I hear that call from afar.

Delegations regularly see Ministers on this subject. Village schools should be given the same amount of money per pupil as all other schools in the local authority, and they can top it up with funds from the annual bazaar, or whatever else they raise money from. The Government should say, "Look, you can have your money per head as always, but the rest is up to you." That would make them responsible in the village for what they are doing.

All primary schools should be able to opt out. That would solve for all time the battle about the continuance of primary schools. I went to a small village school in Lancashire, so village schools obviously matter to me.

I hope that we are careful not to centralise too much. I do not want power to go from local authorities to Government; I want it to go to schools, particularly to parents. Schools should not be run like co-operative societies; parents want to choose. The signs are that, as has already happened, there will be more liberalisation of the common curriculum. Hon. Members on the Committee on the Bill, before the Third Reading, should test everything in Committee. It is not that the Government Members do not trust Opposition Members—some nice people are in the Opposition—but we should be prepared if there were some cataclysm and the Labour party came to power. No Government should give more power to themselves than they would be prepared to give to an alternative Government.

8.56 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson); I have done so many times.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he opened the debate, more than once used the expression, "all our children". I think he meant "all the nation's children", because all the children he was talking about have nothing to do with the state education system; it is all our children who have to do with the state education system.

The so-called Education Reform Bill is an attack on state education, because it has been so successful that for some reason a vendetta has been waged against it and an attempt has been made to privatise education. It is a blatant attack on education and an attempt to open the door to privatisation through vouchers and so on. It will mean the end of equal and free educational opportunities for all our children.

The Bill will bring schools into the jungle of the market place. That is the mentality behind it. The Bill is also an attack on local democracy, which has served us well and has been built up patiently through the years. It reveals the hatred of the Tory leadership for freely elected national representatives. I can remember many occasions in the Chamber when Conservative Members boasted that they were the defenders of local democracy, and I believed them. The Tory party has now been revealed to have changed its opinion and is the great attacker of local democracy. It wishes to substitute centralisation for local democracy.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) engaged in a tortuous argument that centralisation was really the diffusion of democracy, in some curious alchemical way that he thought out for himself, when we all know that the Bill will lead to centralisation and will deliberately break up the long-established traditional relationship between parents, teachers and local education authorities. The Bill comprises 169 pages of clumsily constructed but clearly intended menace to one of the finest and most admired state education systems, and possibly the first in the world. The intended victims are 96 per cent. of our children—all of our children, except those in the private sector. The private sector is immune from this legislation.

We shall be condemned to ask for more money for our children—we can obtain about £1,000 for each child—yet the education of Tory Members' children will cost about £6,000 or £7,000. Conservative Members condemn us for trying to obtain more money. The beneficiaries, therefore, will be a small elitist group, but Tory Members loathe the tremendous success of the democratic comprehensive system. It has borne fruit and has weaknesses, but we are trying to rectify them as best we can. Every normal growing pain of the system has been put under the microscope and magnified beyond belief. The

kept and venal press, which is owned by the Tories for the Tories, has attacked every democratic advance with brutal determination. That is the reality of the education system that is now under attack. *[Laughter.]* Tory Members may laugh, but that is the hard reality of the matter.

The pitiful level of funding for our ordinary children is made to appear too much. HMI will shortly be under attack. Its report was held back until after the election because the Government knew what was in it. Meanwhile, the funding of the private sector is blurred and concealed. More and more Tory parents are seeing through this iniquitous Bill and seeing, with increasing clarity, that their children will suffer. Many of them know that their children have done well out of comprehensive education and from the abolition of the 11-plus. How can anyone, in all conscience, pretend, as the Secretary of State does, that he is interested in higher standards, when his every action will result in lowering standards?

The future of public education in Britain is at stake. Opting out is the backbone of the Act and it will come under attack in the other place as well as from people throughout the country. If opting out is smashed, the back of the Bill will be broken, no matter how many other vicious measures there are in it.

Plans for grant-maintained schools will not increase choice for the majority of parents and will not improve standards. It will profoundly damage the maintained education service. In many areas it will play into the hands of an unrepresentative pressure group in a fundamentally undemocratic way. Instead of using the democratic process to change the way that the local authority manages, if it disagrees with it, a group of governors and parents, by a simple majority and with only a minority of parents involved, can take the school out of the system without regard for the interests of pupils, parents and teachers, and with no debate about it.

I question whether parents want the responsibility of running schools. They have never demanded it before, but it has suddenly appeared from nowhere. It will place an appalling burden on lay people — most of whom are fully committed elsewhere, have other major demands on their time and may have only a short-term interest in the school.

It is rumoured that the Government will probably offer incentives to opt out. The Prime Minister seems to differ with the Secretary of State about how many schools will opt out. If a large number of schools decide to opt out —the Secretary of State reputedly thinks that there will be only a few—the Department will become a huge and growing bureaucracy, similar to an educational Pentagon.

I am sure that other speakers will deal with the appalling problems created by the Bill, but as I have been asked to conclude, I shall say that practically every organisation in the educational world is against the Bill. I am convinced that most of the people of Britain are against it. It is a hopeless Bill and in time it will be seen as a reactionary and useless piece of legislation.

9.2 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): The forces of reaction have been hard at work opposing this legislation. Conservative Members were tempted by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), who invited Members who thought that they had anything constructive to contribute about his education authority to say so. The Select Committee visited Oxford, East during the last Parliament and discovered chaos. We found a hung education authority, where its chairman rotated at every meeting. There was different political control at every meeting, so I do not know why the hon. Gentleman is proud of it.

We had to listen to the spokesman for the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). I apologise for speaking in his absence, but he will be able to get his own back tomorrow night as I read in my local paper that he is addressing a meeting in my constituency on the future of political priorities in this country. He said that there will be fewer students, which will damage the country's prospects, yet we heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there will be an additional 50,000 British students in polytechnics as a result of the Government's policies.

The hon. Member for Yeovil said that we were swallowing the black propaganda of the Government about the failure of the present system. We are now swallowing black propaganda, and I shall demonstrate why. The hon. Gentleman represents the interests of the Liberal party. He speaks so fast that no one will be able to hear him, so he is able to get away with it. However, some of his points came across and I think that they should be answered.

The Bill has not had a long debate. We are told that the Butler Bill had many days of debate in the Chamber, but it did not have a fraction of the public interest that has surrounded this debate. It has run for 10 years, since Lord Callaghan's Ruskin college speech. The much maligned consultation has raised the level of debate above hot air and into detailed discussion about where we are going, away from the political rhetoric.

As a former teacher and as a parent, I am keen to understand the implications of the Bill. I have been sensitive to the worries and objections of some of the teaching professions — not least because I declare an interest as a consultant to the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, my professional association for 20 years. I assure the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth) that the interests of teachers over the water are not neglected by that association, and that the House takes an interest in education in the Province.

Whenever I travelled overseas with the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts in the last Parliament, I was impressed by the need to put our education system in an international perspective. I believe that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) would agree, because he accompanied me to West Germany to study education. A missing ingredient in the great debate has been an international perspective. It has hardly been mentioned in today's debate.

There is an international perspective, partly for historical reasons because of our inextricable links with so many lands, and partly because of the pre-eminent importance of international trade. In financial services and manufacturing we must be able to compete. We worry about import penetration. We have to fight back against those countries which are apparently much more successful. I am an optimist, not a pessimist, and I believe that we can expand our industrial base again, but it depends on knowing one's enemy. Internationally our education standards effect cultural diplomacy, the British interest overseas and overseas students.

There is genuine concern about the Bill, but there is also a great deal of inertia in educational establishments. A good many vested interests oppose the legislation. Is it

[Mr. Robert Key]

political dogma that is driving the Government? I think not. The evidence is overwhelming that we must act quickly. In some areas such as local financial management we are lagging 10 years behind other democracies, whether Socialist-controlled or not. In Australia, Canada, the United States and West Germany we find that even under Socialist control there is far more interest in local financial management. They have moved away from the cult of egalitarianism in education towards the importance of resourcing the needs of individual students in the interest of fulfilment of those students and in the interest of national progress.

When it comes to international economic performance, the evidence on where we stand is staggeringly depressing. I pay tribute to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research for the painstaking work it has carried out over many years, which was referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice). He painted only one side of the picture; I hope to be allowed to paint the other side.

In a recent paper by Hilary Steedman, to be published shortly, it emerges that in France young people seeking vocational qualifications in the mechanical and electrical industries must first attain the basic school leaving certificate. About half of all French school leavers achieve that. It requires a pass in three core subjects, French, mathematics and history with geography, plus standard passes in seven other subjects — that is, passes in 10 subjects. The standard of the written subjects is close to our old CSE grade 1 or 2. That is far above the average attainment for our school leavers, which is CSE grade 4.

In both mechanical and electrical engineering France trains between two and a half and three times as many qualified craftsmen and technicians as Britain to standards which are often higher than equivalent qualifications here. In Britain there are no signs that the vast numbers of YTS trainees have helped to increase the numbers attaining craftsmen's qualifications.

But France lags behind Germany and Japan. All three countries produce two to three times as many qualified craftsmen and technicians per head of the work force as Britain. In one specific subject, mathematics, the difference between English and German achievement is an English lag behind Germany of about two years of schooling. The German average for the lower half of their ability range is close to the average for all English pupils. In other words, the German system has raised the average attainment of its weakest 50 per cent. to that of the English average.

There was worse news from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in the February review. The high technical quality and reliability of Japanese manufactures raises questions about how their training and education are better. Industrial progress and higher productivity obviously depend on many things, but basically, in Japan, it is the result of better foundation courses — Japanese pupils' attainments in science and mathematics are higher than ours — and those higher standards make possible more advanced vocational preparation.

The Japanese curriculum is more centralised than ours, but can we really afford the fourth-rate consequences of the current curriculum fudge? Of course we cannot. The new partnership in the Bill will spread power to the rim of the wheel, which has always been my right hon. Friend's objective since he first raised the issue, rather than have it stuck in the spokes.

The Bill will give parents an important new role and an important new partnership, and I welcome it. Many hon. Members will want to make other points and no doubt they can do so in Committee. If we fail to give the Bill its Second Reading tonight, we shall have wasted a great opportunity.

9.10 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Those hon. Members who attended education debates in the last Parliament will have been struck immediately by the fact that the attendance throughout today's debate has been considerably greater than it was then. For those of us who are deeply interested in education, it is good to see so much interest and so many hon. Members wanting to speak. It may well be that hon. Members differ fundamentally but, nevertheless, education is back in its rightful place at the top of the political agenda.

It gives me great pleasure to say that we have had two excellent maiden speeches this evening. I offer my congratulations to the hon. Members for Hexham (Mr. Amos) and for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks). The hon. Member for Hexham showed a great deal of confidence and it was good to see that he had such a keen knowledge of and interest in his constituency. I would disagree with him quite sharply on one or two of the education points that he made and one or two of the conclusions that he drew, but, nevertheless, I look forward to his future contributions to our education debate.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East paid a warm tribute to her predecessor which will be well received by Labour Members. We miss Mrs. Short. She was a great contributor to debates such as this and to many other activities within the Labour party and the House. Therefore the hon. Lady's comments were particularly apposite.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East also commented on the skill shortage, and we agree with what she said about that. She displayed great knowledge of the employment and education scene, but, again, as with the hon. Member for Hexham, we would disagree fundamentally with her prescription and analysis. Nevertheless it was pleasing to hear two such maiden speeches in an education debate.

That was the pleasant side of the debate. However, there has also been an unpleasant spectacle here this afternoon. We have seen the Tory party at its atavistic, unpleasant worst, displaying a degree of thuggery towards its former leader and a former Prime Minister of Britain that is disgraceful for a mature political party. It may well be that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) disagrees with much that is said from the Conservative Benches these days. He may well disagree with a lot that is done in the name of the Conservative party now, but he clearly has a right to say it without being intimidated. Some of the intimidating behaviour on the Conservative Benches was a blow to the name and traditions of the House and was clearly an attempt to prevent the right hon. Gentleman speaking in the way that he wished, as he has the right to do.

Mr. Pawsey: Where is he now?

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman always falls into the first available elephant trap. He displays the sort of behaviour about which I was talking and which I have already criticised.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No, not at this stage. I will give way when we reach some education issues.

That the Conservative party is fundamentally divided on this issue was obvious not only from the comments made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup today and by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) last week, but from a series of speeches today. It was very interesting to hear the right hon. Member for Chingford, (Mr. Tebbit) expressing some reservations and doubts about the national curriculum. If those doubts creep that far, the Conservative party and the Secretary of State have very big problems indeed.

What has been reflected in this debate is what Conservative local authorities up and down the country have been telling the Government during the consultation period. A list of those authorities controlled by the Conservative party which are wholly or largely opposed to the proposals represents the heartland of Conservatism: the Prime Minister's Barnet, Hertfordshire, Dorset, East Sussex, Havering, Hereford and Worcester, Suffolk, Solihull, Essex, Kent, Kingston, Norfolk, Surrey and Northumberland. All those authorities and many other Tory authorities have fundamental objections to the provisions of this Bill. Not only is Conservative opinion in education against this Bill, so is every national organisation of parents and of teachers; so are the Churches; any body that knows about education and educational practice is against this Bill in principle and in detail.

Mr. Tracey *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I will not give way.

That leads to another factor which has characterised this debate. The Secretary of State finds himself in a unique position. He is isolated in his party from all those involved in educational practice; all those Conservatives in local government who know about education disagree with him. On the other hand we have the Right-wing zealots of the Conservative party who do not trust him and do not know how far he wants to go. So he finds himself in this unique position, condemned on the one hand and not trusted on the other.

Mr. Pawsey: Wait until we vote.

Mr. Fatchett: When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that he wanted to hear about one-nation Conservatism, he spoke to a large extent for his party in local government. He also said, rightly, that it is ideology, the ideology of the market, that dominates this Bill. I thought that it would be useful to have a look at the definition of Conservatism. I went and found somebody who is the architect of the thinking that underpins much of the Bill, Roger Scruton. He said that he would define Conservatism as

"faith in arrangements that are known and tested".

When it comes to education, he does not have that same faith in the arrangements that are known and tested. But the truth about this Bill is that the proposals before us are not known, are not tested and are taking us into waters that are uncharted and dangerous for our children.

When the Government look for approval of some of their assumptions and prejudices, they fail to find it in the educational establishment and among those who know about education. Let us take testing. We have been told time and again from the Government Benches that testing is easy. There is a facile assumption, giving rise to much of the rhetoric about ease of testing. In reality, tests are not easy to devise. Educationists have spent years trying to come up with tests, arguing about objectivity and bias. What do we get from the Government? Three months for experts to come up with tests. Yet those responsible for tests are saying that it cannot be done.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. On this question of testing, if the Government proposal to introduce assessment at seven, 11 and 14 is such a bad idea, what does the hon. Gentleman think of ILEA's recent proposal to test children for reading at seven, 11 and 13?

Mr. Fatchett: We have struggled all through this debate to distinguish, for those on the Government Benches, between diagnostic testing and competitive testing. I will return to that point later. The point that I was making is that Conservatism depends on faith in arrangements that are known and tested.

We have heard no answer from the Government Benches during the debate to the question, "Why this jump to arrangements that are unknown and untested?" I looked at a submission from north Yorkshire county council, which is not one of the Left-wing authorities to which Conservative rhetoric sometimes refers. The council put two points to the Secretary of State which have not been answered so far. First, it asked in what particular respects the service provided in north Yorkshire by the local authority is so lacking as to justify the measures proposed in the Education Reform Bill. There has been no answer for north Yorkshire or for any other authorities. Much more importantly, the council asked in what respects the measures are likely to improve the position in north Yorkshire. Again there were no answers in the debate because there are no answers.

If the Government are serious about looking for answers in the procedures in this House, they have the opportunity tonight to vote for the motion

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I will give way in a few moments.

The Government can vote in favour of the motion and agree to submit the proposals to a Special Standing Committee so that they can be examined.

The right hon. Member for Chingford said that he wanted more time for debate. If he wants more time for debate and more discussion about the detailed proposals on the national curriculum, why does he not join us in the Lobby and vote for the motion to commit the Bill to a Special Standing Committee?

Mr. Tebbit: To start with, I do not recollect actually saying that. That is one good reason why I will not join the hon. Gentlemen in the Lobby. Another reason is that the Opposition have no idea what to do about education policy. They even swapped their spokesman because one was no good and they had to bring in another. They have no policy—*[Interruption.]* They have nothing to offer. They persist in claiming that testing is impossible, when it

[Mr. Tebbit]

is possible. They insist on saying that they oppose the core curriculum and that they are in favour of it. In fact, they are in a complete muddle. They do not admit that education is not satisfying the parents and they have no way of satisfying parents and they do not want to make any progress. That is why——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Fatchett: All hon. Members will realise that I made a mistake in giving way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I will give way to the hon. Lady in a moment. Giving way to the right hon. Gentleman only allowed me to learn of the depths to which he can descend on occasions.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Give way.

Mr. Fatchett: I will finish my comments about the special procedure and then give way.

We have the opportunity to vote so that the House can go into detail on many of the points that have caused anxiety among Conservative Members. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to support us in the Lobby so that hon. Members and educational experts can have the time to put their case to us.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, eventually. The point about the Bill is that many schools, such as those in my area, are good and already follow procedures such as those set down in the Bill. The Secretary of State and the Conservative party are trying to raise standards in the inner-city authorities such as ILEA to those standards that already appertain in Lancashire in Wyre.

Mr. Fatchett: I am delighted that the hon. Lady supports the education provision in Labour-controlled Lancashire with such enthusiasm and I hope that she will continue to do that.

There has been constant criticism of the education system from Conservative Members tonight. Every time Conservative Members have an opportunity in the House or in public they denigrate what happens in education. They give no facts, just prejudice and assertion. That is why they always end up in a position of ambivalence and hostility towards the system. That is why the Secretary of State said that there are more youngsters in higher education, but in the next breath said that the education system is flawed. That logic is flawed, which is why every year the Government issue press releases from the Department of Education and Science to say that more youngsters are passing O and A-levels, but in the next press release or the next speech, they criticise the education system. Their logic is flawed.

The greatest obscenity of all from the Government is that time after time they trade statistics which suggest that they have invested in our children's education. However, they have tried to avoid investing in our children's education. It has been Labour-controlled local authorities, supported by the ratepayers and voted for by the ratepayers, but penalised by the Government, that have continued to invest in our children's education. That is the reality. The Conservative Benches are Benches of shame when one is talking about investment in children's education.

In his opening speech the Secretary of State said that the Bill is about freedom, choice and improving standards. However, there is absolutely no evidence to support any of those assertions. On the contrary, the Bill will centralise, divide and lower standards. It will centralise because the Secretary of State will take 175 new powers. If a Labour Government took 175 new powers, I suspect that all Fleet street and the media would say that that was a law of dictatorship. However, all that now happens is that the Secretary of State smiles happily as the new powers are assumed.

There is no surprise in the fact that he does not worry about that because last year the same Secretary of State took from 400,000 teachers the basic democratic right to negotiate with their employers. Therefore, he is not a man who worries too much about fundamental rights. We are now paying the price of the decision that he took 12 months ago. When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that he was fed up with teachers being hammered, he was absolutely right because at all levels in the education system, teachers have been hammered by the Government and their propaganda for eight years. The fact that they have continued to perform is a great credit to them, but no credit to the Government.

Even the right hon. Member for Chingford has some hesitations about the national curriculum, which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) called the "state curriculum". That is what it is, because it is not open to consultation with parents or teachers about the detailed syllabus. That will be determined by a parliamentary process that will allow little discussion or consultation, even here. We all know what happens in this place with orders. We cannot table amendments or even have discussions because we shall have only a late-night debate. That is the way in which our children's syllabuses for all subjects will be determined.

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall give way in a moment.

To say that that process will avoid centralisation is a great risk because it avoids the truth and the reality of the process. Syllabuses are open to political values and interpretation. The Government will not only prescribe what will be taught but, through the syllabus, what will be thought in the future. They are taking power over not only the teachers, but the minds of our children through what will go in the national curriculum.

Dr. Hampson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Surely he has not forgotten the views about a national curriculum of his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition when he was the shadow education spokesman? He also seems to have forgotten the speech that was made by Lord Callaghan at Ruskin college, which started the great debate that began all of this. More importantly, he seems to have forgotten the report of Her Majesty's inspectorate 10 years ago, under a Labour Government, which proposed that four fifths of school time should be devoted to a national curriculum, exactly as has been proposed in this Bill. Has he forgotten that that happened under his party's Government?

Mr. Fatchett: I believe that our children need a flexible core curriculum. What they have in front of them is a core

curriculum that is virtually all core and no fruit. We need a curriculum for schools that will provide that fruit. What we have got and what we are giving to our children is a prescriptive education without reference to individual children's learning difficulties or ability.

Higher education has not featured much in today's debate. Higher education will be subject to a further degree of centralisation. Our polytechnics will be taken out of local control and nationalised. They will be given to and controlled by the DES. Our universities will also be put under the control of the DES as a result of the new funding system. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals made the point simply when it said:

"This Bill would create a new bureaucratic machinery subservient to direct and detailed ministerial intervention. This is strangely at odds with the Government's declared intention to foster university autonomy and runs counter to its expressed belief that organisations respond best if they are given responsibility implicit in freedom."

The Government are centralising higher education and, on top of that, they are bringing in the absurdity of the contracting system. The absurdity of that system was much better expressed by Lord Beloff in the other place when he said:

"The idea that you can contract with universities in the way in which one business contracts with another for a supply of widgets is an absurdity which could only have emanated from the deepest recesses of bureaucratic Whitehall. I have been trying to imagine the kind of contracts which universities might enter into. One occurs to me which might have been suitable for the University of Cambridge. The Department of Education and Science proposes to supply certain equipment; to wit, one apple tree, Grannie Smith for preference. The University of Cambridge in return undertakes that within a period of 18 months or less, making allowances for statutory holidays, a member of its staff, one Mr. Newton, will invent gravitation." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 June 1987; Vol. 488, c. 164.]

That is the nature and the absurdity of the contract system. It is an absurdity that will direct choice, control freedom in our universities and restrict the range of disciplines and subjects that are taught. It might also have been useful if the Bill had made some reference not just to academic tenure, but to academic freedom. This Government have talked about academic freedom in other contexts. Why does the Bill make no reference to it?

The Bill will divide and lower standards. It will divide because, within our school system, the grant-maintained schools will inevitably become selective, fee-paying schools. The Government deny that, but I believe that that is clear enough if one looks at the city technology colleges already in existence or those planned. When it comes to the selection of a second or third science or the second or third language, the parents will be charged for that subject. That is the way the grant-maintained schools will work.

The idea of testing will also be divisive. From what we have heard tonight it is clear the Government's intention is to compare class against class, school against school. Once that is done, the only purpose of testing is to make it competitive so that children are divided at the ages of seven, 11 and 14 into successes or failures. By doing that standards are lowered because children will be taught to pass and not taught to expand and fulfil their abilities.

The Government have missed an opportunity. There was an alternative agenda that could have been put before the nation: an alternative agenda that talked about expanding nursery education for all our youngsters aged three or four; an agenda that talked about providing adequate resources for books, for GCSE subjects, for school buildings and for tackling the teaching shortage in some subjects; an agenda that talked about developing and resourcing diagnostic testing. Such an agenda spoke of combined and greater school and parent involvement, and about tackling the disgracefully low staying-on rate of 16-year-olds. It talked about providing coherent and valuable provision for post 16-year-olds. It spoke about broadening the access to higher education and ending the iniquitous divide between universities and polytechnics. It is a programme for investment in education to build and extend what is good, thereby providing greater opportunity and higher standards. That is what the Government should have done; sadly, they have chosen a course determined by ideological blindness. As a result, our children, their education and our future will suffer. That is why I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the Bill tonight.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I join the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) in saying that this has been a most interesting debate, with many contributors speaking on a subject that the Government regard as one of the highest priorities for discussion by the House. I also join him in congratulating the two excellent maiden speakers whom we had the privilege of hearing this evening. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) spoke fluently and with excellent content. She spoke of her constituency with warmth and understanding, and I am sure that her new constituents will have every reason to be proud to have her representing them in the House. We shall certainly do our best to make her desire for a city technology college come to pass in her constituency. As she rightly said, as a teacher and parent she represents the views of many people in this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) is obviously a worthy successor to our noble Friend, Lord Rippon. I am not ashamed to admit that his speech reflected my own views on the importance of the maintained sector of education. I agree with his comments about testing, and I believe that he acted well as a chairman of an education committee when he was a councillor in Enfield. He was right to say that there is an arrogant paternalism about people who say that only certain sorts of people are fit to make choices for their children. All parents, from whatever social and financial circumstances they come, have a right to make such choices for their children. My hon. Friend was correct to draw that to the attention of the House.

I wish to clarify three points with which we intend to deal during the Bill's progress. First, we have informed the leader of the Inner London education authority today about the London Institute. We intend to table an additional criterion in Committee with the effect that institutions which, on 1 November 1985, had more than 2,500 advanced further education students — regardless of percentage — shall be included for transfer to the new sector. That will bring the London Institute into the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Secondly, subject to the outcome of our consultation on the document that was issued 13 November, the Secretary of State will add a clause to limit the power to award United Kingdom degrees to certain specified bodies. I

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

believe that Opposition Members will share our views on that. Thirdly, the period that we allowed for comment on charging ended only yesterday, and responses are still coming in. In the light of those, we shall consider how best the law may be clarified to preserve present practice, and any necessary revisions will then be introduced while the Bill is in Committee.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): In 1981, six long years ago, the Government pledged to legislate for special needs in further education, once the legal basis for further education had been clarified. Why has that pledge to young people with disabilities been broken by the Government? Why is not the Secretary of State legislating to meet those special needs at this time?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that the Committee will discuss that matter. I shall now go on to the substance of the debate. The Opposition have tried their best to establish that the Bill is a centralising measure. We have heard about the 175 powers that my right hon. Friend is supposedly taking. Their point betrays their failure to read and to understand the Bill's provisions. The point that they make is essentially trivial. Many of the powers given to the Secretary of State in the Bill are explicitly fashioned to enable him to push responsibility down to the local level beyond the town hall to the schools and colleges. They are devolutionary powers. That is the purpose and the effect of the provisions for financial delegation, more open enrolment, grant-maintained schools and polytechnics.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Can the Minister tell us how long on average it takes the Secretary of State to respond to things such as school closure proposals? The real fear is that the Bill gives him powers to delay. Local people need to know who they can talk to and they must be able to do that quickly. The Secretary of State's record is not good.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am given to understand that on average it takes six months from the notice of publication. Delegations come to see my right hon. Friend.

The Bill provides more choice and more freedom. The proposals mean less control, not more, and that was not the case to anything like the same extent in the Education Act 1944, which has been extensively quoted during the debate. It gave over 100 powers to the Minister at the time. It is the Opposition who insist on clinging to the notion of centralisation. They cannot tolerate real choice for parents and real responsibility for schools and colleges, because those things offend against their bureaucratic notions of planning.

Mr. George Howarth: In answer to a question, the Minister said that Knowsley borough council had said that it wanted a city technology college. One member of that authority made a statement to that effect, but neither the education committee of the borough council nor the full council has made any such approach to the Government. Will the Minister withdraw what she said?

Mrs. Rumbold: The approach from Knowsley was in the form of an open letter on 17 November 1986 to the Secretary of State for Education and Science and it was from the chairman of Knowsley education committee, Councillor Nolan. The letter opposed the idea of a city technology initiative as proposed by the Government, but it invited the Secretary of State to set up a CTC in conjunction with the local education authority. The CTC would be based on an existing school and would be for pupils who were economically and culturally disadvantaged. It would be a joint DES-LEA school. I understand that officials on both sides have met to discuss this and further progress may well be made in future.

There have been many speeches in the debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) made an eloquent speech. He was right to say that all that we have heard from the Opposition was about their power to oppose and not their power to suggest. We shall certainly take careful note of my right hon. Friend's wise points about the job that confronts the colleges of further education. I am reminded that when I made my maiden speech he was sitting on the Government Front Bench and we were talking about the youth training scheme. I am grateful to him for drawing to our attention the important job that the colleges of further education will have to do.

We also note my right hon. Friend's concern about the national curriculum. I noted with some amusement the points that he made about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Christmas tree. I am sure that my right hon. Friend would not wish to put every present upon the Christmas tree, because last year his daughter placed on the Christmas tree for him a beautiful present. It was a plastic tulip. We watched him blow it up for a few days but, fortunately for all of us, he relegated it to another office. I do not think that the officials were very happy about that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made some important points. He spoke about long-overdue reforms in education and said that our reforms have great clarity of purpose. My right hon. Friend is entirely right to say that many teachers will welcome the opportunity offered by our reforms, sharing with us the excitement of achieving high standards in our schools. Let me pay tribute to those many teachers, up and down the country, who share our view that much needs to be done in education, and who will work with a will to achieve the improvements and lever up standards, which my right hon. Friend rightly wants.

My right hon. Friend was also right to point out that there are many low attainers, who happen to be the losers in our present system. He is right: we should take note of that. I was also interested that he wanted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take rather stronger powers to ensure that schools were rationalised, and that money was not extravagantly spent on schools with surplus places. I also have some sympathy with the point that he made about the abolition of ILEA. Other right hon. and hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford made the same point.

Our proposals allow for the abolition of the ILEA if it shrinks to the point at which it ceases to make sense. However, the Government's aim is to improve both the quality and the cost-effectiveness of education in inner London. That would not be achieved at this stage by imposing educational responsibilities on unwilling boroughs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) rightly reminded the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) that the word "local" does not only refer to authorities; it also refers to schools,

communities and the people who live in those communities. Those people are frequently parents, and send their children to local schools.

I was grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) for his constructive comments about voluntary schools and religious education and I undertake to look carefully at the detailed points that he raised. We certainly intend to put right one point that he identified: we shall take steps in Committee to apply the law on collective worship and religious education directly to grant-maintained schools in particular. I shall also look carefully in Committee at the provisions concerned with winding up assets in former voluntary schools to ensure a clear and fair arrangement. I hope that my right hon. Friend will find those answers reassuring.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) touched on academic freedom, and I listened carefully to what he said. He referred to clause 131, which requires the commissioners to ensure that each university and college has proper procedures for applicants. The Bill also gives university employees recourse to the court, which they are now denied. In those ways, the Bill increases the protection of academic freedom rather than diminishing it.

The power of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to give directions to both the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council follows a well-established precedent of the research councils, and no one has ever seen it as a threat to academic freedom.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I have been listening carefully, and waiting for the Minister to reach the topic of academic freedom. If I have understood her correctly, she has said that academic freedom will be protected through recourse to the courts. I do not think that that will satisfy the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, which is very perturbed at the absence of a clause in the Bill to protect academic freedom. That was promised repeatedly by the Secretary of State before the publication of the Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady may not be aware that the statutes must be approved by the Privy Council. That is, and always has been, a great protection of academic freedom.

I think that I should tell the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth) that the system in Northern Ireland already offers the rest of the United Kingdom a great deal in terms of expertise, curriculum development and successful outcome. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is keeping in close touch with the progress of this Bill. The Bill is restricted to England, Wales, and, in certain areas of higher education, to Scotland. The provisions relating to tenure can be extended to Northern Ireland by Order in Council but education legislation in Northern Ireland is usually modelled on that applying in Britain. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be interested in that note.

We all welcome the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) on parental choice. We know how strongly he feels about that. I was glad to hear him say that he welcomes financial delegation. As a former head teacher, he will know how important it is to have contact with schools in those terms.

We warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) to the House. I welcome him particularly as he held a position that I formerly held, as chairman of the education committee in the royal borough of Kingston upon Thames. He spoke about financial delegation. I am glad that since my time in Kingston we have moved to financial delegation. I was also glad to hear my hon. Friend's views on ILEA. The figures he quoted were disgraceful in terms of the deprivation of the children in Wandsworth. We hope that that borough will take education unto itself in order to improve the standards for the children and parents within that area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) drew to our attention the international perspective. It is extremely important that that sort of perspective should be reintroduced into the House because we wish to hear more about those points in relation to how our own children should be set standards.

Opposition Members have spent this evening and many days, nights and hours opposing this Bill. They have written many articles about it and excited many people, together with some of their friends within the unions and some of those who live within the close circle of the education community, into opposing this Bill. Like many people, this morning I awoke to the dulcet tones of the great triumvirate; Mr. Jarvis, Mr. Snape and Mr. Hart. All those people sing the same song. They have been around for a number of years. I knew them all in my former incarnation in the local education authority.

It is not just this Government that those people have been seeking to oppose. When I first met them I was in local government and the Secretary of State for Education and Science was the unlamented Mrs. Williams. She is known to the House for one of the most crucial acts of vandalism that any of us have experienced. It was Mrs. Williams who applied the abolition of direct grant schools and introduced the idea of abolishing grammar schools altogether.

I have to tell the House that it was bitterly spiteful to take that sort of action. It was spiteful against the very children whom Opposition Members are supposed to support. It was spiteful against the very children who, by their own skills and abilities, went into schools and gained an opportunity to go on to higher education or to university. That was a scandalous thing to do. We did not have to put grammar schools back because, mercifully, people such as me managed to resist the hon. Lady when she was trying to take grammar schools out of the system. We managed to preserve our grammar schools.

When the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was still dancing the light fantastic with Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, the Conservative authorities up and down the country were fearful to take action other than to go comprehensive because they had been threatened by the bully boys of the Labour Government that if they ever regained power they would stop the capital allocations to authorities with grammar schools. Therefore, people were frightened that the children in those schools would be acted against by a spiteful Government.

We were told that nobody likes our idea of a national curriculum. Opposition Members say, "Of course we would have one, but it would not be like yours." I have heard that somewhere before — usually in the playground of a school. It is the typical yah-boo attitude of people who know a good thing when they see it and are only furious that they did not get there first.

We hear that no one wants open enrolment. Opposition Members do not say as much, but they mean that they do

[Mrs. Rumbold]

not want open enrolment. They say, "Why should this nasty Government deprive us of the opportunity to push people around and tell them where to send their children?" A recent poll showed that 24 per cent. of people in England would prefer to send their children to other schools. In London, which is run by that model authority, ILEA, 35 per cent. of people wanted something different. The Opposition say that we should allow that unsatisfactory state of affairs to continue.

Rab Butler said when introducing the 1944 Act:

"In the new attitude to secondary education we have two main objectives. The first is that, so far as possible, provision of various types of education should be accessible to all, whatever their social and financial circumstances".

The House will note "various types of education". Rab Butler continued:

"There is no desire to level down; there is only a desire to bring everybody, ever upwards." — [*Official Report*, 19 January 1944; Vol. 396, c. 222.]

All of us subscribe to that, except, it seems, the Opposition, who condemn our proposals to offer grant-maintained status to schools.

Is it so hard for Opposition Members to believe that somewhere out there parents, governors and teachers may want to exercise freedom of choice? I can understand why those who have enjoyed the authority of monopoly are confounded when choice leads to healthy competition for them. Perhaps that is what is needed to spur Opposition Members on to provide what my noble Friend Lord Joseph wanted when he was Secretary of State. He wanted an education that was relevant, broad, balanced and differentiated. Until now, no one has succeeded in achieving that ambition.

The Bill offers parents and governors the opportunity to make decisions and schools the opportunity to seek different status. How many hon. Members who believe in freedom and democracy would really vote against such a proposal? How many Opposition Members will vote against the provision to give parents the opportunity to decide for themselves? How many of them will put their hands on their hearts and say, "We shall vote to prevent people from making choice and having freedom."?

Our proposals will enable steps to be taken towards levering up standards. They will offer individual institutions responsibility for making their own decisions. They will allow people to choose from a range of schools and colleges in the maintained sector on the basis of sound information and without the intervention of authorities, which Opposition Members seek.

If we allow the measures to blossom, our maintained education system—free for the children of this country—will blossom for the benefit of today's children and tomorrow's children. I want every child to have the opportunity to go to the school that his or her parents have chosen and to be able to change schools if his or her parents wish it. I want all that to be offered within our maintained sector of education.

If any doubt remains in Opposition Members' minds, let me remind them of something that they do not wish to hear. The proposals are not being sprung on an unsuspecting electorate. The electorate knew about them, discussed them, read about them, thought about them and on 11 June voted resoundingly for the Conservative party, which is why we have been so well represented during this debate on the Education Reform Bill, which I hope all hon. Members will support tonight.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 348 Noes 241.

Division No. 88] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David

Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart

Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Straw.]*

The House divided:—Ayes 245, Noes 348.

Division No. 89] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus

Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillst, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill accordingly committed to a Standing Committee.

Education Reform Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Reform Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for making grants to the governing body of a grant-maintained school;

(b) in respect of expenses incurred in connection with the proposed acquisition in the case of any school, of grant-maintained status;

(c) for making payments in respect of the establishing, maintaining or carrying on of any city technology college;

(d) for making grants to the following bodies established by the Act, namely, the Universities Funding Council, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Education Assets Board;

(e) for defraying the expenses of the following bodies established by the Act, namely the National Curriculum Council, the Curriculum Council for Wales and the School Examinations and Assessment Council;

(f) in connection with the commissioning by the Secretary of State of work for facilitating the discharge, in relation to Wales, of his functions in respect of the National Curriculum;

(g) for paying remuneration to, and defraying the expenses of, the University Commissioners appointed under the Act; and

(h) in respect of any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act;

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided; and

(3) the payment of sums into the Consolidation Fund.—*[Mrs. Rumbold.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Having sat here for the whole of the Second Reading debate, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak for a few moments on the money resolution, and particularly that part of it that refers to

"any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided;"

We have heard a great deal during the debate about the testing that will take place at 7, 11, 14 and 16. We heard many arguments about why it should not take place, and especially that it would be divisive and would mean the reintroduction of selection. Many hon. Members believe that the absence of benchmarks in the education system is responsible in great measure for some of the deplorable figures that we heard this afternoon about the number of people who leave the education system at the end of compulsory schooling unable to read or write properly. We cannot possibly sustain that. Therefore, I welcome the introduction of the tests.

I want to draw one point to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science. In her excellent closing remarks, she referred to her former incarnation. She will remember when we debated the Warnock report in county hall. She will be aware that the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts last Session considered special education needs, the operation of the Warnock report and the Education Act 1981. Many hon. Members believe that insufficient attention has been paid in the Education Reform Bill to the consequences of diagnostic assessment. If the assessment is to mean anything, if we identify a failure to reach agreed levels of attainment at 7, 11 or 14, we must do something. That "something" is obviously remedial education.

The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts has already identified the fact that there are inadequate resources at present to meet the demands for special needs in education. I fear that, unless some attention is given to that during the passage of the Bill, all the diagnostic testing in the world will be worthless as no extra opportunity will be given to children who fail to meet the attainment tests. I shall be interested to learn what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say about that.

I have only one further point to make, as I do not wish to detain the House. As with all these things, so with financial delegation to schools. My experience tells me that the majority of headmasters will welcome this provision. But it must be recognised that if head teachers are to spend more time in controlling their budgets, it will have an administrative effect on their time. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to deal with this point.

10.37 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Money is at the root of the Bill before us, and I oppose the money resolution because I do not believe that any money that is spent will improve the education service. There are, of course, legitimate concerns. As a former professional teacher with 14 years in the classroom and with three children educated in the public education system, I believe that the Bill will disrupt rather than heal.

The Government, through their use of money, have done their very usual trick. They have played on legitimate concerns and they have starved the education service of funds; they have provoked industrial difficulties and they have aroused public concern. They have coined a few slogans and claimed to have a mandate, and so they have produced the Bill, but the real purpose of the Bill is not to deal with the ostensible parrot-cries that we have heard so often this evening.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On which precise point in the money resolution is the hon. Gentleman speaking?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I can deal with the matter briefly, as this is a very short debate. The money resolution is quite widely drafted and a fairly wide debate is in order.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must say how much I deprecate Tory Members challenging your position in the Chair. They complain that you are not running the House properly, and if the House divides when you name the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) I will support you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am most grateful to the hon. Member for protecting the Chair, but I can assure him that no hon. Member is bullying the Chair; and were any hon. Member to try to do so, that would be wholly counter-productive.

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) intervened, because I have made inquiries about the scope of the resolution, and I believe that the hon. Lady has just voted against

[Mr. Spearing]

subjecting the Bill to the process of scrutiny by a Special Standing Committee. That shows a certain lack of confidence on her part, and of the Government.

I challenge any hon. Gentleman or indeed any professional teacher outside the House to contest what I am about to say. I am going to object to the measure on strictly objective and professional grounds.

The Education Act 1944 has been mentioned several times today. That Act sewed elements together. It came 50 years too late, but it sewed together the voluntary and statutory, the religious and the secular, the elementary and the secondary, and a professional divide among teachers. The Bill is likely to pull those invisible threads apart, and burst them, as the 1944 Education Act put them together.

The resolution refers to maintained schools. The money for those schools will be supplied directly by the Secretary of State and through the opting-out procedure. There will be a tripartite division of schools in this country. First, there will be those that are local authority-funded, then those maintained by the Secretary of State through the opting out procedure, and thirdly those that are fully independent. It is clearly the objective of the Prime Minister, if no one else, to move those schools towards independent status.

There is no need for a money voucher, as in this Bill and preceding Bills the Government have made the pupils the vouchers. It might be asked: what about the fully independent schools? They are provided for by the assisted places scheme, which would no doubt be expanded. I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) has appeared, as he called for a future Bill, and no doubt such a Bill could do that. In other words, there is to be a continuum, of which this Bill provides the foundations. It is claimed that opting out will give freedom to parents, but that will not happen because the Secretary of State will have the money—back to money again for the sake of the hon. Member for Lancaster.

Clause 5 has not been mentioned, but it is a constricting provision as it gives the Secretary of State the power to license, by edict, all examining bodies. Only those examining bodies licensed by him can provide tests for children in maintained schools, even those maintained by the Secretary of State. Therefore the curriculum inside those schools will be determined by examining bodies licensed by the Secretary of State. That represents a most extraordinary centralising power.

Whatever is said in the earlier clauses, and irrespective of the national curriculum, it will be the curriculum laid down in the syllabuses of the approved examining bodies and only those guided under clause 7(4) by the Secretary o State, that will be available in all maintained schools. We have had no justification for that extraordinary power and I believe that the examining bodies were not even consulted before that decision was reached. What price academic freedom?

There is not much freedom for parents, either. In my constituency the parents of the children at the New City primary school met yesterday and they passed a resolution which they sent to me for use in this debate. I did not know about their intention and I was told about that resolution by telephone this afternoon. That resolution deplores the inconsistency displayed by the Secretary of State. It says that he is claiming to serve parental choice but that he has denied them the opportunity of properly considering the Bill's implications. That resolution has drawn attention to a profound and democratic issue. With the timetable that the Secretary of State has presented to us parents have been denied the opportunity to consider the merits of the Bill. So much for the claim of providing parental choice.

This Bill will destroy the essential financial and administrative framework without which teachers cannot properly exercise their professional responsibilities. The Bill will promote uncertainty, disappointment and division. It will lower morale and shatter and disrupt efficient and well-run educational administrations. The Bill will create local confrontations and engender local conflict. It may run the risk of fanning sectarian and community divisions. It will probably result in strife that would not otherwise be there.

The 1944 Act was marked by lengthy and fruitful consultations. It had cross-party support and support across religious denominations. It bridged professional divisions. It placed responsibility with local communities irrespective of party control. In almost every respect the Bill does the reverse. It could do as much harm as the 1944 Act did good.

10.42 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I wish to raise three important points that will be covered by the money resolution.

The tests at 7, 11 and 14 will take extra funding but they will be important for the well-being of future generations of children. They must be attainment tests. They must record the level that pupils have reached in various subjects at those particular ages. The diagnostic element will be contained in such tests, but they will not be diagnostic tests. Some people say that we should have diagnostic tests only at seven, 11 and 14. However, too often, such tests have been used by professionals to show that the children have not achieved the desired level and that that failure was the child's fault. That has brought diagnostic testing into disrepute. That is why I firmly support attainment testing with a powerful element of the diagnostic, but I do not support exclusively diagnostic testing at these ages. I am sure that the GCSE will produce a valid evaluation of pupils' attainments in the core curriculum subjects.

It has been said that the core curriculum proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is, perhaps, unduly rigid. I do not think it is. Nor do I agree with those who say that a core curriculum will produce rigidity in pupils. In France, there has been a standard core curriculum for generations, yet no country produces more individualists than France, which has a fairly rigid, centralised curriculum. So any fear that a core curriculum here will produce uniformity in our children can be discounted.

By contrast, the United States is extremely permissive in the matter of the school curriculum. Yet somehow, despite some outcrops of obstinate individualism — I believe "ornery" is the word — I detect a far greater uniformity of aspiration and mode of thought among the permissively educated Americans than among the educationally well-drilled French.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), who rightly said that he and I have known each other in education for nearly 30 years, pointed out that religious education should be a core curriculum subject, because it is basic to the well-being of any school

that religious and moral education should be on the curriculum and be well and thoroughly taught. I support all that my right hon. Friend said, and add that it is a mistake that school assemblies should take place at any time other than the beginning of the day. A Friday afternoon could not be a worse time for a school assembly, which is an important aspect of school life. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider ensuring that all school assemblies take place at the beginning of the day, although I accept that it is reasonable for groups of pupils to be geographically separated—and separated by age—for various administrative and educational reasons.

No one who has the interests of children and education at heart need fear the right of schools to opt out, to assert their individualism and to develop a special character of their own. Uniqueness in the character of a school is what produces a good one, of which pupils, staff and heads can be proud. That is what the opt-out provision will induce in schools—in a small way to start with, but it will grow and grow. In due course, opt-out will have great implications for the nation, which is why I warmly welcome it.

10.48 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I want to speak first about the idea of testing, and the amount of money that will be put into its development. I used to be the head of a department of special needs in an inner-city comprehensive school. Part of my job covered testing and attainment, so I speak about these matters with more authority than does the Secretary of State. Not a single test in this country can be applied uniformly across its length and breadth to meet all the needs of different areas, and the variety of linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Nor is any one test 100 per cent. accurate. It is a disgrace to use attainment tests to put children into compartments and label some of them as failures at the age of seven. I should like to relate that to the Education Act 1981 and children with special needs.

In the whole Bill of 169 pages there are three and a half sentences about children with special educational needs. It says that children who are statemented will be allowed to opt out of the national curriculum. There is some sense in that, but at the moment many children are not statemented and will still require assistance in areas of special need. That is because of their disabilities — such things as partial deafness or because they have been ill. Will the provision mean that they will all have to be statemented or will it mean that some children who are under-achieving will be forced to this curriculum and through attainment tests where they will perform badly and be labelled as failures? If we had proper diagnostic tests, at least we could identify areas where help could be given. That is what is done at the moment.

Clause 4 contains provisions to allow schools to become grant-maintained. If an opted-out school is full and if more children apply for places in that school than there are places, then, obviously, they cannot all get in. What criteria will be used to decide who gets in and who does not? I have not heard that explained in the debate and I should like the Minister to deal with it. Will there be any appeal procedure for those who do not get in or for those who are unhappy? If a school is opted-out and parents are not happy, is there some kind of local authority appeal provision? I should like the Minister to make that clear.

I oppose the money resolution because, unlike the children of the Secretary of State, my children go to local schools. My daughter goes to the local village school and my son goes to a multicultural state nursery. They are excellent schools and both enjoy the full support of parents and the dedication of the staff. I have not heard one word of support for the Government's proposals from any parent or teacher in my constituency.

If the Government were sincere about improving standards, they would include in the bill money for universal nursery care for every parent who wants it. The Bill should contain money to tackle the inadequacies of buildings, books and resources that were identified by the Government's own inspections. There should also be money to bring teachers' salaries up to the level in the Houghton report and to restore morale and good will to the service. The Government should provide money to improve standards and should not put forward proposals that will simply bring in dogma rather than what is good for our children, our schools and our parents.

10.52 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) summed up the sentiments that I have experienced in all the years since I was a trainee teacher in schools and in my time in the House. It is a great tragedy that the teaching profession, the educational establishment, tends to be far too self-congratulatory. It says that the way it is done now, the way Britain does it now, is the best way and that the only problem is that we are not doing enough of it. Therefore, the profession says that it wants more of the same and calls for more resources.

The one thing about the Bill, warts and all, is that it challenges the education world by saying that there are other ways of doing it. When we look at other countries and at what countries in Europe are doing, we see that there are other ways. Repeatedly, it tends to be us who happen to do it a different way. We really must ask if we are doing it the right way while everybody else is doing it the wrong way.

The national curriculum is the most important thing in the Bill. As I said in an intervention during the Minister's earlier winding-up speech, the role that the official Opposition and the Liberals played in the debate was extraordinary. I had thought that, after more than a decade of discussion started by a former Labour Prime Minister, we had reached a consensus.

Anyone who reads the HMI report on the curriculum for children of 11 and 16 will see that it is virtually identical to what is proposed in the Bill. That was under the last Labour Government. It is only the Opposition or the local authorities or all the vested interests who refuse to read the Bill as it stands. They read it as they want it to be read and see in it every prejudice that they want to see.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Hampson: This is a short debate, and the hon. Gentleman has made his speech. We have waited a long time and I am sure he will forgive me if I do not give way as I usually do.

Let us look back to some of the things that happened. I thought that there was a consensus on this. People forget the William Tyndale school—what teachers were doing

[Dr. Hampson]

to pupils, and the degree of anxiety and genuine concern felt by parents about what was happening to their children's prospects. All of us, including Labour Members and ILEA, said that that was not what we expected. That is why we need two things. First, we need at least a basic national provision that children should be expected to reach certain standards at certain stages. Secondly, although I was initially hostile to, or at least agnostic about it, I have now decided—having listened to the views of the education world—to support the opt-out proposal.

If a local authority is working adequately, governors, parents and teachers will not want to opt out. They do not want the burden, the problems and the responsibility. However, if they are faced with a bolshie local authority or ridiculous reorganisation proposals, why on earth should people not have the opportunity to preserve what they are very happy with? It is a case of put up or shut up. Either the local authorities provide a satisfactory service, or they have no case to answer.

Who is talking about centralisation? My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was lauding the Butler Act. It is, in many ways, a fine Act; however, it set up a partnership, and the tragedy was that the partnership never operated in a balanced fashion. It gave responsibility ultimately to the Secretary of State, but it gave him no power. The Central Government Ministry of Education — now the Department of Education and Science—had no effective authority. It could not even spend money directly on the education system: everything was channelled through the local authority rate support grant system.

Members of Labour Cabinets discovered that to their cost, as we did. Mrs. Williams, when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science, pleaded with the Cabinet to provide desperately needed extra cash for in-service teacher training, particularly in the shortage subjects. She received £17 million, the bulk of which was never seen by in-service teachers, because local government squandered it on everything except what it was earmarked for—not that it was earmarkable.

There is no case for complaining about a growing sense of responsibility and duty being imposed on central Government. British education is already centralised: it is centralised in the local authorities. It is the local bureaucracy — now, increasingly, not even council officials, but councillors, more and more of whom are becoming full-time — who control everything, from painting a school to the curriculum in that school. That is what we must now change.

Finally, let me briefly touch on something that has not, I feel, been properly covered: the anomaly in proposing two separate funding bodies, one for the university sector and the other for the non-university sector. We are constantly doing that. In 1979-80, we did not go the whole hog on parent power and choice of schools; when it came to the crunch on local authority control of the polytechnic sector, we again pulled our punches. We compromised: we left the polytechnics under local authority control and set up a national advisory body. Now we have done the same thing again.

We have realised that polytechnics are part of the national system, and should not be the responsibility of local councils; yet we are not acting on the logical conclusion, which is that there should be a single funding body embracing all the responsibilities of higher education. Of course, that is what the Government intend: why else have they set up two identical bodies, of the same size and with the same functions, unless they intend them eventually to merge? Why do we not have the courage of our convictions and act now, rather than do what we have done with so many aspects of education, and let it drift on for 10 years?

If, unfortunately, we have to face this development, I hope that we will not use two separate bodies to fund the system differentially. I often speak to defend universities, but it is undoubtedly true that the non-university sector is discriminated against. The unit costs — the teaching costs, not including such matters as medicine and research —are very much underfunded in comparison with the other sector. We must not simply set up two bodies to allow dual funding of that kind.

In my experience, most vice-chancellors are not frightened of the proposals for removing tenure. I would prefer to see a categorical statement about the freedom of academics to think, speak and write as they wish, regardless of what that might mean to their job prospects. But if we are to say that university authorities should have flexibility and freedom and not be tied permanently to jobs for life, it seems only right that, as part of their responsibility in creating contracts for their employees, they should have the right to offer tenure.

There are two separate aspects. One is removing the lecturer's automatic right to tenure. The other is the right of the institution to offer tenure as part of a contract to prevent some of our best brains from being attracted, for example, to American universities, which offer not only more money but tenure. That is why the Bill is not right to say "no tenure". The institution should be able to determine, being responsible for its own budget, whether or not to offer tenure.

11.1 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I am grateful for this opportunity to comment on the Bill in general and on its financial and resource implications in particular.

I welcome several aspects of the Bill. For example, I welcome the financial delegation provisions and the open enrolment, so long as attention is paid to the implications for schools which will lose numbers and will be prevented from becoming sink schools. I also welcome to some extent the proposals on a national curriculum, although I would have preferred a reduced core curriculum. The Government have been too extreme in their proposals in that respect.

There is an obvious omission from the financial and resource provisions for the national curriculum in terms of the additional resources that will be required by the teaching staff to get pupils to the age of 16 studying, for example, science and a second language, when considerable shortages already exist in staff in those subjects. We see nothing to show how that shortfall will be made good.

I oppose the Bill for two main reasons. The first is that the proposals for ILEA are totally unacceptable and represent the worst of all possible solutions to what is a crisis. My second major concern is the hidden agenda which the Bill contains — the possibility of selection being reintroduced by the vehicle of opting out. With the option to make grants available to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools, we require a commitment

that such grants will be made conditional on comprehensive schools remaining comprehensive and not becoming selective.

11.3 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I welcome enormously the proposals to delegate financial responsibility to heads. It has always seemed a travesty of professionalism that they should have no control over their budgets. But the Bill contains considerable confusion about the position of the local education authority, for handing down financial responsibility to schools will inevitably involve some administrative expense. There is left with LEA such a large variety of tasks that I cannot see how it will shed any of the staff and resources that it at present commands. No one—not parents, not teachers, not governors—will find it acceptable if an early and direct consequence of the Bill is that more money goes into administration and less into teaching and resources.

Secondly, I am very worried about one element of opting out. There is a serious danger that parents with an idiosyncratic view of education, outside the main stream of what we in Britain have always regarded as acceptable, may still be able to operate their school within the demands of the national curriculum, which is a blunt instrument of control. There is a danger that they will be able to build schools that it will be difficult to keep within the traditions of British culture. I am worried about that, because I should hate to see the balkanisation of the inner cities. We should watch that carefully. If we are to allow schools to opt out, it should be made clear in the contract with the Secretary of State that it is not sufficient to observe the national curriculum alone.

11.5 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I realise that there is very little time left. I very much regret that hon. Members who have been here throughout the debate should not have had the opportunity to speak. It is a sad reflection of the Government's attitude that they were not prepared to provide us with the two days needed for an adequate debate. Not only have some hon. Members not had an opportunity to make a speech but many who have spoken have been denied the opportunity to develop their arguments. Furthermore, many hon. Members have not given way during their speeches, so we have not enjoyed the proper debate that we should have had. Even if the debate had continued until midnight, we should not have remedied matters, because many more hon. Members wanted to take part. Far more time should have been provided.

One or two questions have not been answered. The Minister of State said that the Government intended to introduce two new clauses early in the proceedings. I shall not comment on the one relating to the London Institute, except to thank the Minister for letting us know about it. I am especially concerned about the new clause dealing with charges in schools, which is a matter of great concern. I accept that the present situation is unsatisfactory and that some schools impose all sorts of charges on parents, probably illegally. A greater cause for concern is that those charges cause hardship and deter many youngsters from studying. Appallingly few pupils stay on after the age of 16 and in many instances that is because of charges.

Too often, children at secondary schools have to choose subjects according to what their parents can afford. Time after time, one hears of girls who drop domestic science, although they like it, because they cannot afford the materials. The same applies to boys doing craft and technical subjects. I hope that the Government will introduce the new clause early in the proceedings in Committee so that it can be fully discussed. They should certainly produce it before rather than after Christmas. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the Government will introduce it at an early stage.

I would also press the Minister on whether there will be other new clauses as the Bill progresses. We are awaiting the Government's response on student grants. Earlier today, the statement was made from the Dispatch Box that loans would not be introduced without legislation. Can the Minister assure us that there are no plans to deal with student finance in a later new clause?

During the consultations early in the summer, the vice-chancellors pressed the question of academic freedom. As I understand, it, they were assured that there would be a clause in the Bill to provide some guarantee of academic freedom. That has not been produced. Vice-chancellors have been told that the Government do not propose to introduce such a clause, even at a later stage. Obviously, the Opposition do not like the idea of bits being added to the Bill as it goes along, but we consider that the Government should give a commitment to vice-chancellors at an early stage and produce the new clause on academic freedom.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said earlier that vice-chancellors in Britain support what the Government are doing about academic freedom and tenure. That is not true. I have a letter from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals stating that they do not approve of what the Government are doing. They specifically ask why there is no protection in the Bill for academic tenure, when the Government promised that there would be.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful intervention. I hope that the Minister will answer not only my question but that which was asked by vice-chancellors.

I shall briefly examine the 175 regulating powers. In his opening speech, the Minister said that it does not matter that he is taking all such powers to direct education by regulation because he is going to have advisory bodies which will see drafts of the regulations, and then everything will be perfectly all right. Anyone who has studied the history of the recent social security legislation knows that the Minister has used exactly the same device. He offered regulations to an advisory body for advice. When the advisory body gave advice, in many cases saying that it did not like the regulations, the Government took no notice at all.

The simple way for the Government to allay fears about the regulations is to let us see copies of draft regulations as we debate the Bill. Instead of the Opposition having to put forward hypothetical ideas of what may be in the regulations, we could see what the Government have specifically in mind for them. I challenge the Government at least to publish guidelines for the regulations before we start on the Bill. We could then effectively debate what the Government intend to do, rather than present hypothetical ideas of what they might do with such sweeping powers. I hope that the Minister will answer my brief points.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mrs. Rumbold.

11.12 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I see that the Minister of State wishes to make her winding-up speech. As some hon. Members such as myself have sat through the debate since 3.30 and have not been called, and the hon. Lady has already spoken for 25 minutes, she should not have the authority of the House to make a winding-up speech. She has to have the authority of the House to speak a second time. I oppose that course, especially as there are representatives——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I am sorry that, unfortunately, many hon. Members were not able to participate in the debate. But this is a different debate. The Minister is perfectly in order in catching my eye.

11.13 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I shall try to answer some of the questions that have been raised by hon. Members who have managed to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) was anxious to talk about the implications of our Bill for children with special education needs. I shall try to assure him in respect of attainment targets and programmes of study. Most certainly, they will take into account different levels of ability and maturity among children of the same age group. I recognise that there will be some children with some physical and mental problems, but without statements, for whom aspects of the national curriculum will cause difficulties. It is for those reasons that my right hon. Friend has asked for appropriate advice from the Task Group on Assessment and Testing and from the subject working groups about appropriate arrangements for such children.

My hon. Friend also hoped that the financial delegation schemes would make some recognition of costing in respect of special needs children. When the financial delegation schemes are submitted to my right hon. Friend, as they will have to be, by local education authorities, I am sure that he will look carefully at any recommendations that have implications for the provisions of the 1981 Act to be carried out within local educational authorities. He is anxious to see that those provisions continue.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made clear to the House his views on the financial implications of the Bill first, on examinations, secondly on the point that schools which opt out would be a vehicle of division among children and local education authorities. I note those views, but I am sure he will accept that I disagree with them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) mentioned attainment testing and his reservations about pure diagnostic testing. He made his case quite well and argued that we should not have the concerns of some Opposition Members about uniformity of the core curriculum. He believes, quite rightly, that that is not a reflection of the Secretary of State's intentions.

I share my hon. Friend's view about collective worship and hope that when schools make provision for collective worship, they will not choose a moment of the day when it is unlikely that many children will be there. It is important that collective worship should continue.

It being three-quarters of an hour after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 326, Noes 219.

Division No. 90] **[11.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Speld'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert

Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert

Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Education Reform Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State—

(a) for making grants to the governing body of a grant-maintained school;

(b) in respect of expenses incurred in connection with the proposed acquisition, in the case of any school, of grant-maintained status;

(c) for making payments in respect of the establishing, maintaining or carrying on of any city technology college;

(d) for making grants to the following bodies established by the Act, namely, the Universities Funding Council, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Education Assets Board;

(e) for defraying the expenses of the following bodies established by the Act, namely, the National Curriculum Council, the Curriculum Council for Wales and the School Examinations and Assessment Council;

(f) in connection with the commissioning by the Secretary of State of work for facilitating the discharge, in relation to Wales, of his functions in respect of the National Curriculum;

(g) for paying remuneration to, and defraying the expenses of, the University Commissioners appointed under the Act; and

(h) in respect of any administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act.

(2) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided; and

(3) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.

Northern Ireland (Appropriation)

11.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.

The order is being made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

On this occasion, the House is being asked to approve extra funds for only one vote, which is vote No. 3 of the Department of Economic Development, for which I am responsible. This particular vote covers expenditure on local enterprise initiatives, assistance to the aircraft and shipbuilding industry, mineral exploration, energy efficiency measures, capital investment grants for industrial development and scientific and technological assistance. Only some of these programmes require extra funds.

On 7 July last, the House approved the 1987-88 Main Estimates which included some £92·5 million for these services. Today I seek a further £18·5 million, taking the total expenditure on this vote to some £111 million for the year. The Estimates booklet, which gives full details of the additional expenditure, is available from the Vote Office.

Of that increase, £1·5 million is for the Local Enterprise Development Unit, Northern Ireland's small business agency, known as LEDU. Since its inception in 1971 LEDU has promoted over 31,000 job opportunities in Northern Ireland, including 4,500 in the last financial year. The agency offers a comprehensive range of assistance to small firms in Northern Ireland to assist the expansion of existing businesses and to encourage those seeking to establish new businesses. The agency hopes to promote some 4,000 jobs in the current financial year.

One particular initiative that I wish to draw to hon. Members' attention this evening, well known to those who represent Northern Ireland constituencies, is LEDU's local enterprise programme. This imaginative scheme is targeted on local communities and aims to promote the growth of new indigenous small businesses. This is being done through a network of enterprise centres right across the Province. These centres provide on-the-spot specialist advice, readily available premises and the necessary back-up support services. Already 18 such centres have been set up and 3,000 jobs created, and this number is expected to increase substantially in the next few years.

LEDU's corporate strategy covering the period up to 1989 seeks to build on its excellent track record. The success achieved against a difficult economic background underlines the potential that exists in the Province for developing a vigorous small firms sector and, through it, revitalising Northern Ireland's economy. LEDU has a key role to play in further strengthening this sector and the additional resources will enable the agency to meet this challenging role.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many voluntary workers who give their time, through the local enterprise groups, to assist in providing jobs and in giving their skill and expertise. They do a grand job.

Harland and Wolff requires £18·1 million additional support for trading this year. Many hon. Members are aware of the severe and continuing crisis which, since the mid-1970s, has beset the merchant shipbuilding industry throughout the world. Harland and Wolff's facilities are best suited to the large ship market, but it is in this sector that the company faces its most severe competition, particularly from the far east. As a consequence, it has been forced to turn to orders such as the BP single well oil production system, known as SWOPS, and other sophisticated ships. These ships require different skills, and the difficulties encountered have caused delays in the programme and losses on the contracts. The increased support is required to cover additional contract losses and to meet work-in-progress costs to cover instalments payable to Harland and Wolff but which have slipped into next year. None of this provision is to assist with the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel contract. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) challenges that, I shall be happy to justify it. The AOR contract is separately funded. I can assure him that none of the provision is to assist with the AOR contract.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I understand that the role of Touche Ross, the accountants, is to act as an independent check on the activities of Harland and Wolff and that it is retained by the Government, through the Northern Ireland Office, to do that. Is it not now the case that Touche Ross is also helping with the day-to-day running of Harland and Wolff? In other words, it is not just monitoring what is happening, but also acting as consultants and affecting what is happening there.

Mr. Viggers: The hon. Gentleman may be confusing the role of Touche Ross with that of Deloittes, which has been advising the Government more closely and which has seconded one of its partners to assist with the management of Harland and Wolff. Touche Ross is not that directly concerned with the management of Harland and Wolff.

The additional requirement of £18·1 million for the company has been offset by a reduced requirement of some £1·2 million under the shipbuilding redundancy payments scheme, leaving a net figure of nearly £16·9 million. The redundancy payments scheme has now terminated, leaving only support payments to be made to workers made redundant prior to 31 December 1986.

In section C of the vote, covering energy matters, an extra £146,000 is required in this financial year for consultancy studies. Northern Ireland will need new electricity generating capacity in the mid-1990s to replace plant due for retirement and to meet anticipated growth in demand. There are a number of options for providing this capacity, and proposals have been received both from Northern Ireland Electricity and from the private sector. NIE has offered several alternatives, including completion of the Kilroot power station, either as a dual coal-and-oil-fired station, or simply as a coal-fired station. NIE has also offered the option of the construction of a new station fired by local lignite. In addition, the private sector has made proposals for a lignite station.

The Government need to evaluate these different options very carefully and to ensure that the decision which is taken is in the best interests of the province. It is a difficult decision, involving complex comparisons and some issues new to the electricity industry in the United Kingdom. We need to be sure that we have the most competent professional advice on these issues so that we have all the analysis and information necessary to assist us

[Mr. Viggers]

to come to the right decision. The additional £146,000 for consultancy studies will go towards the cost of this specialist advice.

The subject for debate this evening is a narrow vote. I hope that these preliminary remarks will enable hon. Members to set the vote in its context, and I will do my best to answer points raised in the debate.

11.36 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): For the convenience of the House, I will deal with the question of Harland and Wolff, and my hon. Friend will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, towards the end of the debate to talk about the other matters.

In some ways this debate is starting with a bit of a nonsense. We are being asked to approve appropriations for Harland and Wolff before the accounts to which they relate have been published. It lay within the power of the Government to arrange matters so that we could have had the accounts before us. We could then have had an informed debate, instead of hon. Members having to depend on last week's briefings of selected newspapers to which the accounts of Harland and Wolff were leaked. There was the alleged report of battles with the Ministry of Defence and GEC about contracts being fulfilled or not fulfilled, and then there were selective briefings by interested parties.

It is not fair to the House, it is certainly not fair to the company involved, and it is not fair to its work force and it is bad for morale and for the Government's public image when they cannot answer legitimate questions about their activities before a debate of this nature. It is also bad because the Department of Economic Development had it within its power to lay these accounts before we had this debate.

Mr. Viggers: I should like to make it clear that it is not within the power of DED to lay the accounts; it is the responsibility of the directors, under companies legislation, to lay the accounts. I personally regret that they have not been laid.

Mr. McNamara: They have to be laid in the House of Commons Library since they are the accounts of a nationalised industry. The Government could have put their own pressure on this nationalised industry to make sure that we had those accounts and could discuss the matter properly.

Mr. Viggers: Harland and Wolff is not a nationalised industry; it is a public limited company and comes under the companies legislation. It is for the directors to file the accounts, when they will immediately be laid in the Library.

Mr. McNamara: Let us put it this way. Last week it was leaked far and wide that the accounts would be published and laid. Last Friday they were extensively reported on by the broadcasting media. There were stories in quite a number of newspapers about the contents of the accounts. We were informed that the company had first to give the accounts to DED and that they would then be published. That was how the legal position was described to us when we made this inquiry about it today. If I have been unfair to the Government, I readily withdraw; but I do not believe that I have been unfair, because the Government own the company and the Government arrange the business in this House and the Government could have ensured that hon. Members had the information from the accounts without having to turn to the leaks elsewhere.

It is also unfair because of the importance of Harland and Wolff to manufacturing in the Six Counties. It accounts for 5·5 per cent. of the manufacturing sector, 60 local firms subcontract directly to it, and more than 100 other firms within the island contribute to the work.

It is also unfair to have this kind of debate when rumours are rife especially when we bear in mind the enormous amount of modern technology and product sophistication within the company. With its new computer-aided design and manufacture, it is perhaps one of the leading companies in shipbuilding in Europe. Therefore, we should have had an informed debate about the prospects of Harland and Wolff and the sensible shipbuilding policies within the company. However, all we can do is to ask questions about what is reported to be a loss approaching £58 million and the projected losses for next year to which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State referred.

"Management, Mr. Parker said, is the key to success in the yard."

We must therefore consider the management. Obviously the yard is to be congratulated on the building of a modern technologically based vessel for BP, the SWOPS. However, that vessel, which in many ways was to be the standard bearer for new design and initiatives, is now bedevilled by claims and counter-claims between Harland and its principal subcontractor, GEC. GEC had a £7 million subcontract to deliver switchgear. Harland alleges that GEC delayed, thus altering the procedures of the building of the vessel and that caused the loss. That is Harland and Wolff's side of the story.

Mr. Alan Davies of GEC is reported as saying in *Lloyd's List* that the company

"had asked for, but never received, important technical information to enable the power system to be designed. It had requested a 40-week contract extension to reflect extra design work caused by the lack of technical information. This was never agreed to. Over 50 amendments were made to the design while the switchgear was being manufactured. Drawings and information sent by courier to Belfast were lost, either on route or after arrival."

We are not told what happened to the courier. Mr. Davies goes on to state:

"One switchgear set arrived in Belfast last January, but was not tested until June because of complications with the new series of tests."

Who is right, Harland or GEC? Harland claims that the vessel is now nearly 100 per cent. erected, but the switch boards are only just arriving. That kind of argument, conducted through the newspapers without any access to the accounts or explanations from the Government, is not good for either work force.

The Argus is another first and a flag carrier for the company. It is an important first conversion from a merchant vessel to a warship for the MoD. It is now running about four months behind time with overruns of as much as £20 million. What is the true position about litigation over the Argus? What is the true position about the contract? According to *Lloyd's List*, Harland claims that the vessel arrived at the yard

"with 'the surprise addition' of blue asbestos, red lead paint, and needing extensive design and specialist work which had not been negotiated with the Ministry of Defence".

What is the truth about that? Did the MoD conceal important information from Harland when the contract was drawn up? did the Harland team fail to see and appreciate the problem when it inspected the vessel? Harland alleges that it went ahead in good faith on the understanding that if it was granted the contractual extensions by the MoD it would bear no penalties. Is that the correct position? Will it be able to recoup the losses?

What is the position of Touche Ross and Co., the accountants? What was it doing when the delays and costs were incurred? Why was the DED watchdog doing nothing? Did it report to the DED? What was Mr. Sheerer's role? If Touche Ross did report to the DED, why was not something done early on before the loss was run up?

Why was it necessary to have a second firm of accountants, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells at the yard? What was its precise role at the yard? Who invited that firm—the company or DED? Has that firm produced a report and, if so, what did it say? Has it been acted upon?

Against all the clamour of rumour, counter-rumour and speculation it is possible to overlook the company's achievement in building three superb new vessels. We are faced with important management problems. However, the yard has cut its losses. In 1982-83 employment lost per man was three times the average for the nationalised shipbuilding industry; now it is only half that average. We should not fail to note that the company is working in a hostile climate. All our EEC compatriots subsidise directly their shipbuilding industries with home orders. The British Government do not. All Japanese yards of similar size to Harland and Wolff are losing money heavily. Indeed, they are losing more than Harland and Wolff. Even the Korean yards, whose building and labour costs are half those of Harland and Wolff, are losing a great deal of money.

One of the worst and saddest features to come out of the alleged accounts of Harland and Wolff is the fact that £25 million represents the loss of 1,500 jobs. Those jobs have been lost not just to Belfast but to all the Six Counties. The fact that that money is no longer going into the community on a weekly basis is also a loss. From 1979-87, while the Government have been in power, the number of people employed at the yard has dropped from 7,000 to fewer than 4,500.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: I would rather not. I gave way three times to the Minister and there are other hon. Members who wish to speak. We will lose time if I give way. I am not seeking to dodge a question—I rarely do—but I must get on.

When the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced the upturn for next year's estimates he said that the continuing difficulty regarding Harland and Wolff's trading position would mean

> "A significant increase in public support for the yard. This very substantial commitment (the exact amount will be decided later) has naturally limited the extent to which I have been able to make resources available for the development of other services in the province."

That is ominous not only in terms of help for other services in the Province, but also because it appears that Harland and Wolff is being made a scapegoat for the failures and disappointments in other industries. That is unfair to Harland and Wolff. The degree of uncertainty in that statement will be of great concern to the work force and the management. We should have the precise figures and projections before the House when we are debating such issues.

The future prosperity of the shipyard is important. We should be discussing a sensible shipbuilding policy. We should be discussing how the skills and new technologies in that yard can be used to the maximum benefit of the yard and the employees. However, because of the way in which business has been arranged and information has been leaked, we are discussing rumour and counter-rumour. That is regrettable, because Harland and Wolff is a fine yard and it deserves the confidence of the House.

11.48 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I welcome the aims of the Appropriation Order to release additional funding for expenditure in Northern Ireland.

I regret that, yet again, the method of dealing with Northern Ireland business is repeated despite previous and continued objection from right hon. and hon. Members. This time last year the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) expressed concern about dealing with this business late on a Thursday night and the business managers have responded by moving the business to Tuesday night. Perhaps the next move will be the introduction of new means of dealing with such matters.

The Northern Ireland economy and the unemployed have yet to benefit from the money that has been spent on bolstering the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I wonder whether it is right that representatives of a foreign Government with the right to sit on such public bodies as the Industrial Development Boards should have more authority and influence than those of us who have been elected to represent the interests of Northern Ireland?

I ask Ministers and the Secretary of State to recognise that the people whom we represent already spend twice as much of their income on fuel as do other average households in the United Kingdom. Already, electricity costs are running at the highest tariff in the United Kingdom. When can we expect a decision on future power generation in Northern Ireland, so that we can produce electricity much more cheaply than now, when we depend too heavily on oil? Will the Minister note that the proposed increases in electricity charges will place an unfair burden on our domestic consumers and threaten the viability of industry? Will he consider the injustice of increasing costs to Northern Ireland consumers by more than the rate of inflation?

Northern Ireland consumers are all already energy-efficient—they cannot afford to be otherwise. Increased fuel charges put at risk our pensioners and all who depend on benefit and cannot afford the high cost of fuel bills for coal and electricity. Will the Minister assure the House that his Department is allocating adequate resources to Northern Ireland's industry, and helping to promote marketing skills in the search for overseas market outlets for manufactured goods and services that can be provided in Northern Ireland?

I welcome the announced additional expenditure for local enterprise development units. In my constituency, there is already close co-operation between the LEDU, EEC funding, local councils and voluntary groups in supporting new business starts. Such local self-help is

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

already contributing to job creation, and I support further financial investment being made available to LEDUs for local self-help.

It seems fashionable to cast doubt on the wisdom of spending more money on the shipbuilding industry in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. When the company in question is Harland and Wolff, there too often appears to be panic from some quarters that should know better. Shipbuilding throughout the world has had a torrid time in the past few years, and it would be wise to consider the position of Harland and Wolff in that light. Every major Japanese yard lost money in 1986-87; so did the main Korean yards. Only one — Hyundai — made a small profit — a mere $200,000. While no one suggests that everything in the garden is rosy, it is right that the positive aspects of Harland and Wolff should be put on record this evening.

The firm employs about 5 per cent. of all who are employed in manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland. It is presently emerging from a period of transition during which the work force has contracted from more than 9,000 to about 4,000. During the past nine months, that rationalisation has resulted in the work force being cut by about 22 per cent. I emphasise that that cut has been achieved by negotiations between the work force and management, without the loss of a single day's production through industrial action. Is there any other area of employment in the United Kingdom where this could have happened, or any part of the public sector where such an employment cut has been put into effect?

Despite such good co-operation at all levels within the company, the Minister will have realised that it has been virtually impossible to undertake that degree of reorganisation without considerable production difficulty. Whatever the good will, the continuity of production could not possibly have been maintained as before at the moment when 800 men are becoming redundant. The job sacrifices in the yard and the benefits that will derive from the flexibility procedures that were introduced simultaneously are the basis for success in the future.

The flexibility procedures within the work force are continuing, and their benefits have yet to be appreciated. Again I ask the Minister where he would hope to find that degree of realism anywhere else in industry. Where else could a massive redundancy scheme be combined with a radical flexibility programme such as we have seen operating at Harland and Wolff?

As one worker said to me more than a year ago, "This flexibility will cost a lot of us our jobs, but to oppose it will cost us the yard." Not only on the shop floor has Harland and Wolff made giant strides forward. At a time when depressed world markets, redundancies and new work practices might have overwhelmed another firm, Harland and Wolff was moving from the low-tech end of the market towards high-tech shipbuilding with bulk carriers and tankers to ATS, AOR and SWOPS.

We have also seen a positive change in the financial sphere. In 1982-83, Harland and Wolff had losses per employee more than three times those of public sector nationalised yards in Great Britain. The figure has been reduced six times, to around half that of any nationalised yard in Great Britain. With redundancies in the work force, Harland and Wolff received cash support of about £63 million for 1987-88, whereas in Great Britain as whole with a work force of about 6,500, yards have received about £118 million.

Again, in terms of losses, the public sector nationalised yards in Great Britain have reported losses of about £150 million, compared with an expectation of about £60 million. No one takes these figures lightly, least of all the management of Harland and Wolff, but this is not the time for faint hearts. The Secretary of State in his public expenditure statement to the House last week, promised that the Government would support and indeed encourage scientific and technological development. He is right to look for development in those areas. Harland and Wolff are there already, and it is leaner, fitter and hungrier for success.

With the reduction in Japanese shipbuilding capacity, the problems faced by the Koreans and the disappearance of Scandinavian yards, there will be opportunities for the fittest, high-tech United Kingdom yards. Harland and Wolff is now the most modern yard in Europe.

Let me remind the Minister that, while the people of Northern Ireland realise the sacrifices that everyone is having to make to maintain our shipbuilding industry, they also realise that it is not merely a case of 4,000 jobs or 5 per cent. of our industrial base that is at stake; it is also a case of more than 600 local firms supplying goods and services to Harland and Wolff every year, or, to put it another way, almost 300 firms which invoice Harland and Wolff every month. It is not only Northern Ireland that benefits from the goods and services that enter the gates of Harland and Wolff. Jobs are provided in Scotland and England as a spin-off from that yard; many hon. Members will acknowledge that.

I and the people that I represent are content that there should be proper rewards for effort and that no job should be left half done. The efforts of the company's chairman, John Parker, and of the board, the management and the skilled work force deserve continuing support. Already nearly five years of effort have gone into establishing a 1990s shipbuilding industry at Harland and Wolff. It is right that the job should not be left half done.

12 midnight

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I wonder how many people in Northern Ireland realise that parliamentary business vitally affecting the lives of many people there has come before the House at midnight. The protest has been made before and deserves to be made again about the unfair way in which the business managers arrange for business affecting Ulster and its future to be taken late at night or in the early hours of the morning. The people of Northern Ireland are not getting a fair deal in that regard.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that it is a matter of regret that this debate takes place before the accounts of Harland and Wolff have been published. Therefore, it is not possible to scrutinise the affairs of the shipyard in the way that they deserve to be scrutinised by hon. Members. As hon. Members have said, shipyards all over the world are losing money right, left and centre. The exceptions are, perhaps, yards in South Korea and one or two other shipyards where labour is cheap and Governments give massive support to the industry.

Losses are faced by the Belfast shipyard, and we cannot ignore the fact that we are in a time of doldrums for the

shipbuilding industry. I go by reports that appear in the press and I read in *The Independent*—I think that it was yesterday's — reports about the shipyard. It was suggested that Harland and Wolff is facing losses of about £50 million to £63 million. However, that figure includes a substantial amount paid for redundancies. Certainly, drastic steps have been taken by the shipyard management to reduce the financial burden on the yard. During the first nine months of this year employment has been cut by 22 per cent., and about 1,300 employees were paid off between January and December. That is a staggering percentage of the work force. There are not many, if any, firms at the present time that have made such swingeing cuts in their work forces in order to survive and face competition.

Those redundancies mean a great deal in human terms, not only to those who lose their jobs but also to their wives and families. I know many of the people who have lost their jobs. They spent many years working in the shipyard, and it is heartrending to talk to them, because they face a bleak future with little prospect of employment. My fear is that the massive redundancies in the yard will make Harland and Wolff less viable when the time comes for it to benefit from increased orders for ships. I hope that my fears are not realised and that the Belfast yard under the wise guidance of its dynamic chairman, Dr. John Parker, will one day be restored to its former glory. Dr. Parker has behind him a skilled and dedicated work force which can deal with any order placed with the yard. It is impossible to be certain about projections, but the world shipping market is expected to improve in the 1990s, when many ships will need to be replaced and there will also be orders for new ones. The yard must be preserved, so that it can meet that demand in the coming decade.

In the meantime, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) pointed out, the yard is concentrating on designing and building very sophisticated ships. Perhaps that is the way ahead for it.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): It is right that the hon. Gentleman should draw attention, as did the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), to the position of Harland and Wolff in relation to the Northern Ireland economy. Does he accept that 124,800 people have never been employed, either inside or outside Harland and Wolff, and that some consideration must be given to the large number of people who are unemployed in other industries in the north of Ireland? While I support substantially what he has said about Harland and Wolff, we must not lose sight of the fact that 18·2 per cent. of the population are at present unemployed, and never likely to gain employment.

Mr. Kilfedder: I fully agree with the hon. Gentleman; I am glad that I gave way to him. I never forget the unemployed—some of whom have been out of work for years, and some of whom have never had a job. I am in politics to try to ensure that Northern Ireland has a future, and that we can develop industry which will provide employment.

Apart from that, however, if we have a good, viable, dynamic yard, not only will the people employed in that yard benefit, but all the other companies in Northern Ireland, as well as Great Britain—I mentioned them in an earlier debate—will be able to take people on to supply items needed by the yard. In every way that we help Harland and Wolff, we help those who, sadly, are at present out of work. We must all work together, regardless of our political tags, to ensure that there is work for those who are at present unemployed, and that there is a future for our Province.

Mr. Mallon: Throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kilfedder: Throughout Northern Ireland. I am glad to have the hon. Member acting as a Greek chorus for me.

I shall not go into the details of the various ships that are currently being built as an example of the shipyard's present sophisticated approach — the three aviation training ships, the SWOPS vessel for BP and the design and building of the auxiliary oiler replenishment ship. However, I should like to refer to what was mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, the reports of claims lodged by the yard against the Ministry of Defence and GEC. I read yesterday in *The Independent* that Harland and Wolff has filed claims against the Ministry of Defence for additional work on the aviation training ship Argus, and it is suggested that the claim is for about £30 million.

I shall not go into the points already made by the hon. Gentleman. However, I am interested as well. Perhaps the Minister could help us on that point, and also on the separate claim against GEC for late delivery of components for the oil production ship, which seems to be in the region of £2 million in extra charges.

We must compare the performance of the Belfast shipyard with that of the nationalised shipyards of Great Britain. In the debate on 9 July last it was stated that the Great Britain shipyards, which employ just over 6,000 workers, require £118 million in support to meet their losses. Harland and Wolff requires between £50 million and £63 million for a work force which on average throughout the current year was 4,500, so that the relative loss per year per man is about half that of the nationalised shipyards in Great Britain. That shows the lengths to which the shipyard has gone to be efficient.

But that is not the whole story. As I pointed out in that debate, many companies which depend on the shipyard there provide additional employment. That is why Harland and Wolff is essential to the future of Northern Ireland.

An additional £146,000 is required for consultancy studies into additional capacity of energy supplies. A brilliant team at Queen's University is doing excellent work in wave and water power. Such supplies are often ignored when we debate energy issues, but they could provide additional valuable energy for Northern Ireland. The team includes Professor Long, head of the department of civil engineering and research at the university; Dr. Trevor Whittaker, manager of the wave power group at Queen's and manager of low head hydro research; and Dr. Michael Gould, manager of the demonstration project at Benburb, County Tyrone.

This team is building the first British shore-based wave power development, on the Isle of Islay, which will provide power for a small village in about 18 months' time. This development is using a Wells turbo engine, named after Dr. Wells, the former head of civil engineering at Queen's, who invented the engine in 1976. A Bangor firm manufactures Wells turbine units for navigational buoys which are used throughout the world.

The Minister should bear in mind the work of this brilliant team. Turbine technology has been applied to

[Mr. Kilfedder]

harness energy in rivers and, as I say, it is hoped to provide enough power for a small village from the demonstration unit at Benburb, a development that is being funded by the EEC.

There are many river sites in Northern Ireland which could employ low head hydro technology and thus provide a reasonable amount of electricity. That would not only help to save electricity generated by oil but would cost less for firms which could utilise it. Many textile firms are sited beside rivers and they might benefit substantially. Such schemes—of river or wave technology—will not replace large power stations, but they could help the economy and the consumer.

It is often pointed out that the cost of electricity is far too high in Northern Ireland, where the people are denied the opportunity of piped gas, which is available in Great Britain, at a reasonable cost. Commercial costs are pushed up, which makes it difficult for business to compete with companies in Great Britain and elsewhere. Worse still, the private consumer of electricity faces heavy electricity bills. This bears heaviest on the elderly, who need constant heat during cold weather yet cannot afford it. Many of them cannot afford to use electricity all the time and so take to their beds during the day. I appeal to the Minister to bear in mind how he can help those who deserve better of our society.

12.15 am

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the additional funding for the Department of Economic Development and the broad spectrum to which it is being applied. I would argue for a much greater input of financial support to this area.

I agree with the Minister's commendation of the Local Enterprise Development Unit and the local enterprise programme. However, I temper that praise by saying that nothing is so perfect that it cannot be improved upon. The time that LEDU takes to process projects could be speeded up greatly. It could also engage in a little more risk taking than it has done hitherto. That would help the small enterprise industries in Northern Ireland to make a more meaningful contribution against the rising tide of unemployment.

I welcome the additional funding of Harland and Wolff, which will support jobs that would otherwise be at risk. In saying that, I must put it on record that I give that support notwithstanding the fact that the minority community in Northern Ireland will benefit not one iota from that funding. Indeed, it has not benefited from the funding of Harland and Wolff for the past 50 years because of the company's discriminatory job practices, which can be adequately proved with reference to its job records.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): How can the hon. Gentleman justify that statement when it is on record that jobs in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England depend on the company? Is he saying that no one of a different persuasion gets work because of Harland and Wolff?

Mr. McGrady: The answer to that is that the number of Catholics employed by Harland and Wolff is minuscule. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Scarman report and to the Fair Employment Agency report. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] If the hon. Gentleman wishes, he can go to the Library and look up the facts. It is a known fact in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) touched on the subject of energy. There is an abundance of energy in Northern Ireland. We complain, not about its scarcity, but about its cost, which is higher than can be borne by Northern Ireland industries. Like other hon. Members, I was amazed by the recent announcement that energy prices in Northern Ireland are to be increased by approximately 10 per cent. from next April. That is in the context of an unemployment record which is among the worst in Europe and, at 19 per cent., certainly the highest in the United Kingdom. Last September, out of a relatively small population, almost 130,000 were unemployed, notwithstanding the fact that an additional 20,000 were on Government schemes. While we laud the activities of the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit in creating jobs, we must bear in mind that 5,000 to 6,000 new job seekers come on to the labour market each year. I take as an example my own area of South Down which straddles the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) in the town of Newry. South Down has 30·6 unemployment and 36·3 per cent. male unemployment. That is not the worst. In some areas, male unemployment is 44·7 per cent. That means that, statistically, in a street in a town such as Strabane, every second man is unemployed, and he is long-term unemployed. Forty seven per cent. of the unemployed in Northern Ireland are long-term unemployed and dependent on social security. A report on the cost of living that was published this week shows our unemployment to be the highest in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Beggs: We on this Bench deplore the high level of unemployment in the areas to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Will he join with me in appealing to all those in the United States who have the power and influence to guide investment into Northern Ireland properly to direct their energy, rather than to obstruct and create division and problems where they do not exist and encourage investment in the very areas where the minority community will most benefit? We on this Bench will not obstruct but will encourage such investment.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I wholeheartedly agree with him. I have already done as much as I, with one voice, can do to direct the energies of the potential United States market to Northern Ireland in the promotion of new industrial enterprises.

I draw the Minister's attention to the growing increase in unemployment in sectors such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing in Northern Ireland. The biggest increase in unemployment—7·8 per cent.—has occurred in the construction industry. I regret the announcement that was made last week by the Minister with responsibility for the environment about a cut of £42 million in the housing budget. That cut will create between 2,500 and 3,000 further unemployed in the construction industry. It seems that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing in respect of job maintenance and job creation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he is straying from the

subject. He must direct his remarks to the three items: the shipbuilding industry, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, and consultancy studies on energy matters. I am sure that he will be able to direct his remarks so that they fall within one or other of those categories.

Mr. McGrady: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I stand corrected. I thought that I was on the right wavelength, showing how the money from the Department of Economic Development could be spent rather than in the way that is indicated in the order. The IDB and the Department of Economic Development are responsible for the maintenance and creation of jobs for which the appropriation is required. I ask the Minister to ensure that the IDB pursues a more realistic and vigorous campaign of job promotion.

It is no longer appropriate or desirable to sentimentalise about the fact that about 19 United States presidents came from Ulster. The investor is not interested in such tittle tattle. He is interested in whether there is a good, educated, and trained work force. He is also interested in the reality of terrorism and violence. He will either accept or reject it. Investors go into other sectors of terrorism for job promotion. If the matter is properly presented in its proper context, there will not be a disincentive to invest in Northern Ireland. If such investment takes place, less appropriation will be required in future.

12.23 am

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Thank you for giving me the opportunity of speaking in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It certainly causes me great regret that business managers were unable to decide the business relating to Northern Ireland, and especially that which affects the economic development of Northern Ireland. The matter is not regarded as sufficiently important to merit a proper debate and airing at a more appropriate time than at nearly half past 12 in the morning. That highlights the fear of many people in our Province that Northern Ireland business is simply tagged on at the end of the business of the United Kingdom and does not receive a proper airing and debate. The subject of the debate is economic development and unemployment. Our province has one of the worst unemployment rates in the United Kingdom, yet we have the debate at this hour.

While I welcome the additional funds being made available, I do not welcome the discussion at this hour. Affairs of Northern Ireland can be discussed in the Anglo-Irish Conference at midday, yet the people participating in the conference were not representing the people of Northern Ireland, and do not have their confidence. We are supposed to represent the people. My constituency has high unemployment. That should not be treated lightly. Rising unemployment should cause concern to every hon. Member. My constituency does not rely on multinationals to employ the majority of people, but on more and more small firms, many of them family based, in which the LEDU will have a great input.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I have been listening to hon. Members talking about the rising tide of unemployment in Northern Ireland, and I seek information. Unemployment is being reduced in the rest of the United Kingdom fairly rapidly; is that not the case in the Province? If not, perhaps the figures could be given to me.

Rev. William McCrea: The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) could get the figures from the Minister more readily than from anybody else. It is true that no improvement has been made in employment in Northern Ireland. In parts of my constituency unemployment is getting worse rather than better.

I resent some of the remarks made in this debate, because it seems to me that a game is being played concerning who has the job. Opposition Members mentioned whether the person getting the job was in the minority or the majority community. When will the House realise that, whether a person is from the minority or the majority, we want jobs for everybody? It is in the best interests of the whole community that all persons have jobs. This subject has been played around with in recent days in the press, and it would excite some hon. Members if members of the majority community were thrown out of employment to give the jobs to the minority. That is not correct, and does nothing for unemployment in Northern Ireland.

A large portion of my constituency is regarded in the Nationalist tradition. I appeal to the Minister for initiatives and schemes which will ensure that all my constituents, whether they be Nationalists or Unionists, will have stable and meaningful employment. I will fight for that and ask the House to support it. Recently, I forwarded a protest to the Minister about the reduction in the standard capital grant rate because I believed that it would have an adverse effect on jobs in the Province. The CBI expressed its concern about this matter and hon. Members from Northern Ireland were approached about it. It is proper that that objection on behalf of the community was clearly expressed.

Will the Minister instruct the Local Enterprise Development Unit to be more helpful with regard to the processing of applications? There seems to be a lack of speed in this regard, which discourages those who are trying their best to get off the unemployment list and into employment. I would welcome an improvement in this matter, as would other Northern Ireland Members. I hope that the Minister will make representations to ensure that those seeking help will be able to obtain it more speedily.

Will the Minister say what the present position is with regard to the lignite exploration in my constituency on the lough shore and what consultations there have been with the local residents who are affected by it?

Does the Minister agree that Northern Irish industry is facing not only an uphill battle against the security position and terrorism but against the high electricity and energy costs? It is deplorable, with such a high unemployment rate, that employers are discouraged from coming from the Province by these high tariffs. As my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said, the cost of energy is detrimental to the elderly and sick in our community. More earnest consideration should be given to this matter.

I know that other hon. Members want to take part in the debate, so I shall end now, having raised certain matters and I trust the Minister will be able to help in his reply.

12.32 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Members for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) all raised a point that many hon. Members would

[Mr. David Alton]

echo—the way to deal with Northern Ireland business is not through Orders in Council or by these late night debates. The more appropriate method would be the Standing Committee that is allowed for under Standing Order No. 99. I hope that the Minister will take seriously the suggestions that have been made to him and his ministerial colleagues that there are more civilised ways of dealing with Northern Ireland affairs. The general sentiments of those hon. Members who have spoken should be registering with the Minister. It is not popular in Northern Ireland to have business dealt with at the fag end of the sitting day. The issue should be taken more seriously than it has been hitherto.

As to the order, I shall make some brief comments and ask the Minister some questions. With regard to what he said about the LEDU, will he give the House an assurance that, having read the comments of former Assemblyman Gordon Mawhinney about the protection rackets that have been operating in Northern Ireland, everything possible will be done to ensure that funds are not abused and misused in the way that they have been and that people operating in paramilitary organisations will not have a chance to suction any of these funds into their own pockets?

My second point concerns that possibility of the new lignite power station. The Minister talked about the private sector perhaps being involved. I know from meetings with the Northern Ireland Electricity Service there is some concern that this may be a paving measure to the privatisation of the NIES. Will the Minister refer in his reply to the future of the Northern Ireland Electricity Service and tell us whether it will stay in public hands? Can he also say when the report is likely to be published on whether the lignite power station will be given the go-ahead?

On the announcements the Minister made about Harland and Wolff, I should like to echo some of the comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I was fortunate enough to meet some representatives of the work force of Harland and Wolff about 10 days ago, with Dr. John Alderdice. I have tabled some questions, but I should like to put one or two of them to the Minister now.

Can he tell the House his projection of the number of employees in Harland and Wolff over the next five years, and whether the projection for the intake of apprentices over the next five years will be related to trade or whether other factors will be taken into account?

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Gentleman is asking the Minister to give a projection of the number of employees in Harland and Wolff over the next five years. Would the hon. Gentleman give his projection of the number of employees at Cammell Laird over the next 10 years? That would make as much sense.

Mr. Alton: It is precisely for that reason that I ask the question. I want to know what projections the Government have for the shipbuilding industry throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the next five years. I put it seriously to the Minister that, if they do not know the answers to these questions, one thing they could usefully do would be to encourage the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to carry out an investigation into the future of ship-building and to examine carefully the implications for Harland and Wolff. For all the reasons outlined already by hon. Members and for the economy of Northern Ireland it is crucial that the jobs of the remaining 4,000 employees in Harland and Wolff are maintained and that everything possible is done to expand the industry because of the reliance of many other industries in Northern Ireland on Harland and Wolff—*[Interruption.]*—and on the mainland too.

Can the House be given an assurance that Harland and Wolff will maintain a design facility capable of catering for future orders without relying on sub-contractors? Considering the general contraction in the area of the yard, and given that Harland and Wolff is renting shipyard space to other companies, will there be room for expansion if there is an upturn in shipbuilding in the 1990s? What is Harland and Wolff receiving in rent from other establishments located in the shipyard complex? Do Her Majesty's Government believe that there is a future for marine engine building in Belfast?

Will the Minister say whether Her Majesty's Government consider that the 28 per cent. ceiling in European countries provided for under the sixth directive of the intervention fund will prevent Harland and Wolff from building larger vessels, because it is clearly being breached in many other European Community countries? I wonder if the Minister has considered that question.

I should like to thank the Minister for the efforts that his Department is making to try to ensure that there is an upturn in the economy of Northern Ireland. I believe, as he does, that it is crucial that the political climate changes so that terrorism and the outrages committed in Northern Ireland will end, allowing the economy to prosper.

12.38 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I challenge one point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I declare an interest, in that my recent employers have been for some time involved with management consultants and with Harland and Wolff, assisting the company to improve its productivity. The hon. Gentleman rightly said that it is a good yard with a good spirit and pointed to the considerable improvements in productivity and profitability over the last few years.

After all the lessons of the last few years, it is absurd for him to suggest that those improvements could have been made without some shedding of labour. The over-manning in all United Kingdom shipyards, including Harland and Wolff, was massive compared with almost all our northern European counterparts and even worse compared with the far eastern yards to which he alluded several times.

While we are on the subject of the far east, Japan has an extremely successful manufacturing industry and low unemployment precisely because a lower proportion of its work force is employed in manufacturing. It has slim manufacturing outfits as the basis of its economy and a much lower proportion of its work force in manufacturing than Britain.

I am glad to hear from the contributions of several hon. Members that the Conservative party is not alone in recognising that in order to go forwards and achieve a modern economy, there must be slimming down in the older industries.

12.40 am

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): May I lend my voice to that of my colleagues about the order that is being imposed upon us and on the population of Northern Ireland without our consent? The whole basis on which we legislate for Northern Ireland is iniquitous and hypocritical. No other part of the United Kingdom would accept a system of Government where there is only limited room for debate and where such dictatorial decisions are taken without the consent of the Northern Ireland Members of Parliament, decisions which are bulldozed through the House without any opportunity for amendment.

The situation now appears to be much more worse in the eyes of the people of Northern Ireland, who see the hand of the contemptible partners of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in decisions affecting the Province, an agreement which has caused great unrest and has contributed in many ways to the rundown of our economy due to the fact that the political instability caused by the Government's deal has caused potential investors to withdraw their interest in setting up shop in the Province. I know of at least four instances where considerable investment has been lost.

That scenario gives me the scope to say that I cannot under any circumstances give credence to this debate this evening. I give notice that I shall always continue to oppose the system of government until such time as we are treated as equal citizens in this part of the United Kingdom with the same rights and privileges as are enjoyed by my fellor citizens on the mainland.

It is ironic that I feel equal with my parliamentary colleagues when I am in the House, yet when I return to my constituency I assume another mantle and am treated as a member of some obscure coconut colony. The most lowly down-and-out lying in a London underground station in a cardboard box is more equal than I am in the eyes of the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman a long preamble, but he must now come to the order before the House.

Mr. Walker: I apologise for taking up the time of the House by digressing in that manner, but it is important to set the record straight for the people of Northern Ireland. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me that opportunity.

We are here to pass comment on this Appropriation order and, although I have voiced my objection to the system of its imposition, I must pay tribute to the Government and their Ministers for their commitment to the Province.

In vote 3, LEDU is a unit which has done sterling work in the Province and I would certainly not decry its achievements. But its terms of reference should be enlarged to encompass local and service industries, which with just a little bit of extra help, could help to reduce the scandalous dole queues.

Too much emphasis is being put upon export potential in assessing the need for assistance. It should be recognised that the geographical location of Northern Ireland is a disadvantage to exports. In the competitive climate now existing throughout the mainland and in Europe it is most difficult for Northern Ireland companies, despite all their dedication, to compete effectively.

There are innumerable small companies which are supporting the local economy in many ways, but which, to create greater efficiency, require more financial assistance. Such assistance would result in products being manufactured more competitively and so help our economy, with better quality and lower prices. I have been trying to help many dedicated Northern Ireland companies by making representations to LEDU, but until such time as the criteria are relaxed there does not appear to be any great desire to increase the eagerness of such companies to improve the economy and to give some of our unemployed a sense of purpose once again.

I note that in the vote we are discussing expenditure by the DED on local enterprise, which sector will also include the action for community employment schemes, set up to involve those out of work for 12 months or more. I am pleased that the Government have indicated that it is their intention to plough another £10 million into this worthwhile activity, but would caution that this should only be where such activity is properly administered and supervised. I am very concerned about some of the schemes that were initiated in parts of Belfast, where there was a heavy paramilitary involvement, and money and effort were channelled into the wrong quarters. There were other schemes which were a complete fiasco, where principals were using their workers to upgrade their homes and those of their families and friends. There were other instances where the ACE scheme was a front for other confidence tricks. There was an incident where vast sums of money were conned from overseas and trust funds on the assumption that action for community employment was healing divisions within the community. The perpetrators of this deceit were having four or five continental holidays a year on the proceeds.

I know that Government are aware of some of the tricks that have been used in this connection and are tightening up the provision of funds to these projects, but the DED must be vigilant: there are too many cowboys in the Province today, looking for easy money without effort.

I also urge the Government to investigate means whereby self-help schemes could be introduced, particularly in the construction industry and especially with regard to renovations and repairs. The present grant scheme as administered by the Housing Executive is slow and ponderous, and is not giving value for money. The organisation is too autocratic and is unable to protect the applicants from the parasites who prey on them. We need small bodies of experienced architects and surveyors set up under Government in each of the Housing Executive districts to advise applicants how to proceed in the acquisition of such resources to getting the job done expeditiously and properly, within a list of approved contractors.

I support the Government in this use of funds for the benefit of the Province.

12.48 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I would like to thank the Front Bench for allowing me a few minutes in which to make two simple points, but points which I think go to the heart of the problem in the north of Ireland. If we look very clearly at the subject matter of this debate, without the preambles that we have had to listen to in regard to extraneous matters, what we are doing is discussing what is in geographical terms about one-tenth of the north of Ireland, as this debate has shown. One

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

tends to forget that Northern Ireland is primarily an agricultural country, that its major industry is agriculture. Listening to this debate this evening one would imagine that everything began with, centred on and ended with, one industry, and one sector of that industry.

Times out of number I have tried to point out in the House to the Secretary of State for Social Services or to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that we are paying 33 per cent. more for our electricity, somewhere in the region of 12 per cent. more for our food, more for our transport, more for our books, more right down the line, yet these higher costs are not reflected in higher social security benefits or agricultural grants. We must have an integrated approach towards real parity in terms of the basis on which the decisions are made. Rather than talk about the hour at which we debate these matters, we should look for an integrated approach to the problems of the north of Ireland in terms of social services, agriculture and industrial investment. We must consider an overall integrated approach. If we do not do that, we shall lag behind in everything.

Secondly, I want to make a plea for the agricultural sector of the community in the north of Ireland. Before you remind me Mr. Deputy Speaker of the terms of the debate, I suggest that unless we include the LEDU, the IDB and all the job creation agencies within an integrated rural plan, we shall simply try to create employment in an urban context and we shall forget about the vast majority of the people living in the north of Ireland.

That type of integrated rural development already exists on paper. It was produced for the European Parliament and the report was accepted by the European Commission. It has been favoured by the European Parliament, but it has not yet been adopted by the Government. Unless we can tie LEDU, the IDB, tourism and all the job creation exercises into an integrated plan for rural Northern Ireland, we shall not be able to cope with the problems.

I remind the House that far more people are involved in agriculture than in Harland and Wolff. Far more people are involved in agriculture than any other single industry in the north of Ireland. When we consider that there has been a shortfall of £14 million this year in farm incomes, that gives an idea of the nature of the problem. Every year that this debate crops up, it crops up on one small section of the northern Irish economy. I call for an integrated approach and parity for all the sectors affecting Northern Ireland and towards the whole question of rural development.

12.52 am

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I promise the Minister that I shall be brief. Most hon. Members tonight have paid tribute to Harland and Wolff and I join in those tributes. I visited the shipyard recently and was most impressed with the changes that have been made and the use of high technology in an attempt to make the shipyard competitive internally and internationally. Everyone working in the yard, both management and the work force, deserves great credit. The most we can do is wish them success for the future.

I am intrigued by the additional £146,000 that the Government are allocating for the consultancy studies on energy matters. I am intrigued because in an oral reply on 23 July 1987 to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) the Minister said:

"substantial progress has been made in a complex examination of options which, as my hon. Friend knows, include a proposal presented by the private sector as well as by Northern Ireland Electricity."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1987; Vol. 120 c. 477.]

That related to the provision of electricity in the Province. The Minister did not say a little progress or a bit of progress. He said that: "substantial progress has been made." In the short time left to the Minister, will he tell me how much more progress must be made in addition to the substantial progress that has already been made before he can answer the following questions? First, what is the Government's view on the completion of phase two of Kilroot? Secondly, what is the Government's view on the possible development of a lignite-fired station in view of the statement of the Secretary of State in November 1986 that a decision would be made earlier this year? Thirdly, what are the Government's views on an interconnector with Scotland and on the future ownership of Northern Ireland Electricity? In the few minutes that the Minister has in which to wind up, I should appreciate answers to some of these questions.

12.57 am

Mr. Viggers: I have about three minutes in which to answer a number of questions.

Substantial progress was made with electricity generation by the summer. It is a complex task. The interconnector has effectively been ruled out and we are faced with a choice between the private sector, public sector lignite generation and the completion of Kilroot 2. We hope to reach a decision on the matter soon.

Several hon. Members spoke of the manner in which the House debates Northern Ireland affairs. There are cogent practical reasons for debating the affairs of Northern Ireland in the way that we do. The Government believe that they are best discussed in the context of the general discussions on the arrangements for the future government of Northern Ireland.

The hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) raised the issue of Harland and Wolff, as did many other hon. Members. Clearly, Harland and Wolff has not been immune from the continuing crisis in the worldwide shipbuilding market, and with some of the most competitive yards, Harland and Wolff has been forced to enhance productivity and to restructure to maintain a position in the market. Its future will depend on its winning further orders, which it must do in the context of the European Community sixth directive, to which the Government are committed.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North spoke about Harland and Wolff's difficulties in the market place. The Government's subsidies to the company have totalled £225 million in the past five years, and we have provided more than £58 million in the current Estimates to support the yard in the current year. This represents a substantial commitment to enable the company to trade successfully.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North also referred to the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about expenditure plans for 1988-89 and later years. The House will be aware that the order relates

to the financial year 1987-88 only, but it is a fact of life that the substantial public subsidies to the yard pre-empt resources, although we make every effort to protect the other important public services and programmes in the Province.

Hon. Members asked about the role of Touche Ross and Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. Touche Ross has been retained by the Department of Economic Development to assist it in monitoring the company's operations, whereas Deloitte, Haskins and Sells was asked to undertake a specific assignment this summer to strengthen the financial management of the company.

Mr. McNamara: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister, but he seems to have contradicted what he said earlier. Is he saying that Touche Ross is involved in the day-to-day management of the company?

Mr. Viggers: No, not at all. Touche Ross is involved in monitoring the company's operations, particularly in relation to AOR. Deloitte, Haskins and Sells has been directly involved in the management of the company. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Sheerer, who is a partner of Deloittes and has been seconded to Harland and Wolff and is directly involved in the financial management of the company.

It being one and a half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 3) (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That in the course of its consideration of the matter of Education in Scotland, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 7th December at half-past 10 o'clock.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

IRA Bomb Damage

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12.58 am

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity to bring before the House the problems of people whose property was damaged by an IRA bomb on 16 December 1986. By doing so I hope that I remind the House of the many people, not only those in Belfast, south, but throughout Northern Ireland, who suffer a double jeopardy as a result of terrorism. On the one hand they face the perils of the IRA and on the other the ravage of bureaucracy. To prove that it is appropriate to debate this matter, a bomb was placed outside the York road police station in north Belfast tonight. Thankfully it appears that there has not been a repeat of the catastrophe that occurred in south Belfast a year ago. Tonight's incident reminds us all that this is a continuing problem.

Right hon. and hon. Members will not be likely to remember the incident that happened a year ago, some time after midnight — again there is a connection regarding the time of this debate. There have been many other bombs, and the recent bomb in Enniskillen is fresh in the memory of most people. A year ago there was great devastation in south Belfast. The bomb destroyed the Royal Ulster Constabulary station and an Evangelical Presbyterian church building. It affected some 800 detached and terraced housing. It completely destroyed some of those houses and caused considerable damage to others and several other public buildings near by.

Given that the House has been told about the intense security measures against terrorists, the amazing thing is that that bomb was transported in a school, bus. I know that the Government are fanatical in their pursuit of value for money and that the greatest use must be made of all facilities and personnel. I was brought up in west Belfast, and I do not believe that the thirst for knowledge in that area is so great that night school classes would be held late at night. However, that bus travelled through the area and was not detected or stopped for examination until it reached its target. That says a lot.

I pay tribute to the members of the RUC who sought to evacuate the area quickly and rouse the people. However there were people still in bed when the bomb went off. Mothers with small children were badly affected as well as elderly people. The emergency first aid repair scheme did a reasonable job patching up houses. There the story of help ends.

A self-help committee of working people entered into a bureaucratic jungle to try to get work done. In a letter on 29 July 1987, the Minister claimed that the present arrangements, developed and refined over the years, seemed to work well. That committee would say otherwise. It had to pursue the authorities to get things done. The Minister believed that the Committee wound itself up having achieved its objectives. In fact, the people are still feeling the after-effects.

For example, one house in Brookland street—No. 4 — which had been restored, is now being damaged because the neighbouring house—No. 6—is still lying open to the elements and the vandals. Public money is being wasted. One of the original committee members who lives in No. 8 is still fighting the authorities to implement legal procedures to get the owner of No. 6 to act. Why that

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

person does not act may be debatable. I suspect that it is because he is facing the problems that the others faced previously. To a reasonable extent the Housing Executive fulfilled its obligations to its tenants, but that is not to say that tenants were pleased. They suffered the shock of the bomb, the discomfort caused by workmen doing extensive and minimal repairs, and, in some cases, the continuing effects of bad workmanship. Many also suffered delayed shock. That, of course, was shared by all who experienced the trauma of the attack.

Subsequent helicopter activity in the area, although considered necessary by security chiefs, has added to the tension. Residents find it difficult to sleep at night, and some, who do night work, face the same problem during the day. But the dread of another attack of which inadequate notice is given to evacuate dwellings is the instinctive response to many to the sound of that helicopter.

Those who suffer most from what I call the ravages of bureaucracy are people in the private sector. They shared the previous problems and are responsible for repairing the damage, with officials making every effort to minimise compensation payments. Remember: we are speaking of private dwellings, not business or industrial premises for which, in time, the expense could be recouped.

Assessors take a simplistic attitude, which I faced myself when my home was bombed 17 years ago. They speak of betterment, and regularly allow about 20 per cent. for that. However, that cannot be claimed by the owner-occupier. It is even debatable whether betterment is the right word, when one considers the type of workmanship and materials that are available now, compared with those of the past. When Ministers are reproached on the subject, they calmly state that if a person is aggrieved, he can take the matter to the courts. Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware of the pressures on the courts, which take even longer to settle things. So the owner still suffers.

Let me give one or two illustrations. One single-parent family found great difficulty in getting the work done by a company, and encountered delay, along with her solicitor and surveyor, in obtaining help from the Northern Ireland Office. The Northern Ireland Office assessor gave low valuations. Six months after the explosion, she had still not received a settlement. Finally, in July, she was pressed into a settlement because she had become so weary. The old adage—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush—held true. Along with others, that woman suffered from the violence of terrorism and the ravages of bureaucracy.

Sometimes, officials do not list all the requirements at once. They ask for one piece of information, and, when the person supplies that, he is told that something else is needed. If officials would list everything required at the beginning, that would shorten the time involved. I know that sharp practices are perpetrated by those who seek to go one better, and the Government, in their opinion, is a broad board from which one should squeeze as much as possible. I am not criticising the Government's good housekeeping; I am criticising the inordinate delays and bad practices of some assessors.

One lady had moved into her house as recently as July 1986, having installed a new damp-proof course and had the house redecorated at a cost of £1,300. She was the head of a single-parent family, trying to teach part-time to look after her child and keep things going. At the time of the bomb damage, her ceiling was not considered worthy of emergency repair, although it was leaking rain. The NIO assessor claimed that the roof suffered from nail fatigue. The difference originally lay between £7,643·16 and an offer of £2,214·70, which allowed about £365 for a new roof.

Fatigued though the nails might have been, if it had not been for the bomb the roof would have lasted for quite a long time. If any builder can put on a new roof for £365, I should like to know his name so that I can recommend him to my friends.

By 29 October this claim had not been resolved, although some movement had occurred. No work had been done, because the settlement had not been granted. Earlier, I said that the bomb affected about 800 houses. We learned tonight that most of them have now been sorted out, but that about 150 have yet to be settled. I do not know whether that is a good going rate, but I do know that at least 150 families are still facing the ravages of bureaucracy.

I shall give a final illustration of the problem. A young couple had to move out of their house because of its poor state as a result of the bombing. When the loss adjuster for the Northern Ireland Office made his first visit to Brookland street, he had no equipment and borrowed a child's torch to use in the attic space. When my constituent, who was concerned to get things sorted out, kept phoning the office involved, the clerk handling the file got angry and telephoned my constituent's solicitor to complain about the phone calls. There is something wrong when a public servant starts to complain because a member of the public who is the aggrieved interested party keeps pressing for action.

When the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was interviewed by the BBC outside the remains of the police station on 17 December last year he said:

"All claims will be settled without delay."

This must ring hollow to some and at least to one person, who has still not settled. Because the family are seeking to repair the house and sell it and because they have been forced in the meantime to move elsewhere. I have been told that that may have a bearing on the basis of settlement, as mentioned in a letter to me from the Minister as recently as 12 October.

I could enlarge upon the argument, but tempus fugit. I hope that the House now understands a little better some of the problems of my constituents and of other people throughout Northern Ireland that result from 18 years of terrorism. They suffer not only from the terrorism of the IRA but from the ravages of bureaucracy.

1.12 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I share the view of the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) that this subject is of very considerable importance. I welcome the opportunity to take part with him in this debate. The hon. Gentleman is to be congratulated on the commitment that he has shown in pursuing the interests of his constituents since the bomb went off almost a year ago.

It may be helpful to the House if I give a brief summary of the bomb attack. As the hon. Gentleman said, a school bus was hijacked and a bomb containing approximately 600 lbs. of explosives was loaded on board. The driver was

forced to take it to the RUC station on the Lisburn road where the alarm was raised. Only 20 minutes were given for people to be evacuated from the area and, as the hon. Gentleman said, that was in the early hours of the morning. That in itself is a reflection of the sort of people that we are dealing with.

Although most of the area was evacuated when the bomb exploded, as we have been told it caused very extensive damage to property. The hon. Gentleman will not know that a couple of days later I was at a function in that part of the city and at about midnight I visited the station and saw for myself the devastation there. It was so bad that the station had to be demolished. Many residential properties, shops and vehicles over a wide area were damaged. Coming as it did just before Christmas and during a period of very cold weather, this attack showed yet again the callousness and the despicable behaviour of the Provisional IRA. It could not have failed to realise that such a large bomb placed in a high-density area would seriously affect the lives of many ordinary people, including the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the young. I join the hon. Gentleman in saying that, had it not been for the prompt action and bravery of the security forces, many innocent people would probably have been killed or seriously maimed by that outrageous attack. It was indeed fortunate that there were relatively few casualties. The hon. Gentleman and I share a particular concern to express out deep unhappiness at the desecration of the church beside the station.

Various Government Departments and other agencies are involved in the aftermath of major bomb incidents, and the Lisburn road bombing was no exception. Representatives from the Northern Ireland Office, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the welfare services were all quickly on the scene after the area had been cleared by the security forces. An advice centre, manned by the various statutory agencies, was set up on the morning of the incident, and during that week more than 260 callers were given advice and assistance on how to claim compensation.

Obviously, the immediate priority following an explosion of this nature is, of course, to wind and water-proof the damaged dwellings, and, with a few exceptions, that was accomplished by 16 December. The Department of the Environment also arranged for temporary repairs to be carried out under its first aid repair scheme. Much of the work was undertaken by the Housing Executive's own work force, but additionally a number of outside contractors were engaged to do repair work, and two firms of consultants were retained to supervise it. Tremendous efforts were made by all concerned to accomplish as much as was humanly possible before Christmas. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognised that in his speech.

I think that it would be appropriate at this point to pay tribute to the resourcefulness of the residents in the face of such devastation. I entirely take the hon. Gentleman's point that not only did they suffer physical damage to their property—which is outrageous and upsetting enough—but they also suffered emotional damage, with the fear and uncertainty that that brings. That is one of the aspects of life in Northern Ireland, subject to terrorist attack and threat as it is. Those who do not live there do not appreciate the reality as much as those who do.

Despite the personal difficulties that residents experienced, they still found time and energy to assist those less fortunate, especially the sick and the aged. They also showed foresight in setting up an action committee to spur others into action, to co-ordinate repair work and to speed up compensation claims. Officials from the Northern Ireland Office had a particularly useful meeting with the action committee, under the chairmanship of the then lord mayor, Mr. Wilson, when formal liaison arrangements were established.

Let me quote the chairman of the action committee, Mr. Ken Cummings, as reported in the *News Letter* on 2 June, when the committee, having largely achieved its objectives, was disbanded. He said:

"most of the repairs have been carried out. Most people have agreed sums with the Northern Ireland Office. There are still a few cases outstanding but we have done most of the work the committee was set up to do."

I shall return in a moment to the cases that have not been settled. Perhaps it will be helpful to the House, however, if I turn first to the compensation arrangements in Northern Ireland. There is of course, no equivalent scheme elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The purpose of the criminal damage compensation legislation is to compensate any person whose property is damaged either as a consequence of terrorism or unlawfully by three or more people. The underlying principle—this is important in relation to some of what the hon. Gentleman said—is that an applicant should be restored, in so far as it is possible to do so financially, to the position that he was in before the damage occurred. That is obviously an area of debate.

The hon. Gentleman cited some examples of where honest people had an honest difference of opinion in trying to assess what was the state before the damage occurred. The principles governing the award of compensation are well established in law, as are the procedures under which claims are made and determined. The assessment of compensation generally follows common law principles and is payable both in respect of actual damage and consequential loss.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Minister agree that legislation does not permit all those who suffer loss because of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland, and especially in the business sector, to be compensated?

Dr. Mawhinney: I was coming to that very point.

Assessment is generally based on reinstatement cost, except in the case of investment properties or markedly unprofitable businesses, where compensation is based on market value. Claims are made to, and determined in the first instance by, the Secretary of State. Obviously, an applicant must substantiate his claim, and it is recognised that he may need professional advice and assistance to do so. If his claim is successful, he is reimbursed for all reasonable legal and other costs. If an applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the Secretary of State, he may appeal against it in the county court and thereafter to the High Court if he is still dissatisfied.

That answers one of the points the hon. Member for Belfast, South made. I am sure he was not suggesting that he did not wish to have that backstop of the appeal to the court in the event of genuine disagreement. That is a benefit to his constituents and others in Northern Ireland. But I assure him that we make every effort to settle amicably and reasonably and that we do not see the court as an easy option to enable the Northern Ireland Office to avoid trying to come to an agreed settlement with people who have suffered criminal damage.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is it not a fact that most people in Northern Ireland facing the question of the courts see that as another hurdle to surmount? While I recognise the concept of a backstop, it can also be used as a polite lever —"You may wait for months and do worse".

Dr. Mawhinney: That is factually the case; they might wait for months and do worse. It is not for Ministers to prejudge what the courts will decide. But we are of similar mind that it is a backstop, and I believe—speaking from memory—that there were probably only five or six cases in this whole incident which were going to court, and that is a measure of the point I am making.

As a result of the bomb attack, a total of 512 claims were lodged for damage to property, of which 322 have been finalised, leaving 190 outstanding. Six of the outstanding cases—I do not have to state this from memory—are subject to appeal in the county court. Interim payments have been paid in 59 cases, and in 47 cases offers of compensation have been made. The most common cause for lack of action in the remaining cases is that detailed documentation has not yet been submitted. The amount of compensation paid so far is about £900,000.

I think it perfectly legitimate for the hon. Gentleman to ask whether, at the end of the year, I can be more specific about exactly what is holding up the cases on which payment has not yet been made. Excluding the six cases that are going to the county court, that leaves 184. Claims where final offers have been made, as I have said, are 47. Claims where the offers have been made but clarification has been sought by the applicant number five. There are six claims in which details are outstanding from the applicant and in which the Department has sought discovery. There are 47 claims awaiting a loss adjuster's report and two awaiting a valuation office report. There are 49 claims awaiting details of quantum from the applicant's professional advisers and 28 claims awaiting other information from the applicant and or his advisers.

I make no criticism of those who have to bring together documents and professional advice to submit it to the Department. I hope that the Gentleman will find those detailed figures helpful and will understand that the Department does not seek to slow down the process in any way; it is trying to respond as quickly as possible as soon as the documentation becomes available to it.

I take the hon. Gentleman's helpful and constructive point that it might help to speed things up if the Department had a comprehensive list of the information that it required and could make that list available immediately if such an occurrence happened again. We hope that such occurrences will be rare. I shall certainly draw his suggestion to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. I shall also ask my right hon. Friend to inquire in particular into the case of No. 6 Brookland street to which the hon. Gentleman referred and ask him to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister tell us what is the delay in the 46 cases in which an assessor's report is awaited? Is that an assessor from the Northern Ireland Office or an independent assessor trying to value the claim on behalf of the claimant?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman is pushing me too far on the details. I suggest that he writes to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State if he seeks such information.

It is perfectly understandable that those who have been disadvantaged in this way should want to telephone to find out how things are progressing and to chase their case. However, the hon. Gentleman will accept that, if that happens too much, it gets in the way of progress on the case. We need a happy balance. I am sure that no official was gratuitously rude, but we need a balance between the claimant's legitimate concern and the ability of the Department to get on and do the job.

The hon. Gentleman made much of what he called the bureaucratic jungle. I hope that on reflection he will feel that things are not quite as bad as the picture that he painted. The Northern Ireland Office is staffed with hard-working and conscientious officials who seek to discharge a difficult job. Most would accept that they do it with a commendable degree of professionalism and good humour.

The hon. Gentleman is right that, as we are dealing with large sums of public money—£900,000 so far—we have a statutory responsibility to ensure that that money is accounted for and used only for the purposes for which we are expected to use it. Perhaps that is all encompassed by the hon. Gentleman's phrase "good housekeeping".

I am satisfied that every effort has been made not only to alleviate the hardship of those who suffered from this outrage but to expedite the payment of compensation and the restoration of the damaged property. The House should be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing us to examine this issue. I hope that he feels that the debate has been worthwhile, not only for him but for his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Regeneration Grant

1. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received from private sector companies for the urban regeneration grant.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): More than 30 schemes have been discussed with the Department. Thirteen are being appraised.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. What further information does he have about this important new initiative, especially in terms of value for money, jobs and investment in the private sector?

Mr. Trippier: A good example is the Round Oak scheme in Dudley, which, for a grant of £3·25 million, has generated four times that figure from the private sector by way of investment. It will also generate more than 1,000 new jobs.

Mr. Fraser: When the poll tax doubles the average rate burden in the inner-city area of Lambeth, will the Secretary of State consider urban regeneration grants for private companies to compensate for the lack of purchasing power among their customers?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that urban regeneration grant is already available to people in Lambeth, especially to private developers.

Mr. Summerson: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are long delays in processing urban regeneration grants and that that is causing a great deal of dismay in the property industry, which is doing its best to regenerate inner-urban areas?

Mr. Trippier: We are always looking at ways of simplifying the grant procedure and cutting out as much red tape and bureaucracy as we possibly can. We have to strike a fine balance between cutting out red tape and being the guardians of taxpayers' money.

Dr. Cunningham: Is it not true that, one year after this power was put on the statute book, not a penny of urban regeneration grant has been spent—no expenditure has been incurred by the Government? Is that not indicative of the shambles of the Government's inner-city policy? Is it not because of this incompetence on the part of the Department of the Environment that the Prime Minister is now talking about taking these policy matters out of its hands altogether?

Mr. Trippier: I am glad to have this opportunity of welcoming the hon. Gentleman back after his recent illness. However, having said those nice things, I must tell him that he is absolutely wrong. The new scheme was introduced in April this year and had attendant publicity.

Dr. Cunningham: It became an Act a year ago.

Mr. Trippier: Of course, but it was introduced only in April this year, and, to a certain extent, it was overtaken by a certain event called the general election. The publicity for it was subsumed during that period for reasons that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge. Subsequently, we have resuscitated the publicity and the scheme has attracted a considerable number of applications.

Dr. Cunningham: The Government have not spent a penny yet.

Mr. Trippier: I answered that when answering the supplementary question.

Council Housing

2. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to change the system of repairs and maintenance of council properties.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): We have no plans to make major changes. It remains every council's duty to keep its housing in good repair.

Mr. Sackville: I am disappointed to hear that, because many council tenants in my constituency have to wait a long time for repairs, and when they are done they often turn out to be inadequate and unprofessional. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is outrageous that my constituents should have to suffer hardship and inconvenience so that a Labour council can hang on to its DLO and give it the extra business that was previously done by private tradesmen?

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that there is a problem in Bolton, and I do not have that only on the authority of my hon. Friend, although that would, of course, be enough. The council has also noticed that something is wrong and has commissioned a special survey on the quality of repair and maintenance. I hope that that will help, but I can only echo what my hon. Friend has said. Doubtless the council will be stimulated by the reforms that we are proposing to bring a more competitive regime into tendering for this kind of work.

Mr. Soley: Given that the appalling problems of disrepair and maintenance in the private sector are far worse than those in the public sector, and that there is also a problem in the public sector, why do the Government not put some public investment back into the public and private sectors to improve housing in this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: It may have escaped the attention of the hon. Gentleman that 100 per cent. of receipts can be used by the councils to which the question relates for capitalised repairs. That is a route that councils such as

Bolton should follow. Bolton council should consider their rents, because they are below the north-west regional average and well below the national average.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: While the Housing Bill is going through its stages in the House, will my hon. Friend look at the possibility of well-organised tenants' associations being given powers to look after their own maintenance and financial delegation, in the same way as those powers are being given by the Education Reform Bill to governing bodies?

Mr. Waldegrave: That suggestion is very positive. The right of tenants' choice that we are putting forward will give them exactly that kind of capacity. They will be able to organise secondary co-operatives, for example, to do exactly that sort of work. That is one of the attractions of the proposals.

River Pollution

3. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to reduce the levels of nitrate and nitrite pollution in Britain's rivers.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I am considering a number of initiatives for strengthening and extending water pollution controls and expect to make a statement on the Government's policies in the near future. In due course the National Rivers Authority will be responsible for maintaining river water quality.

As to drinking water quality, I have decided, after taking legal advice, that the term "maximum admissible concentration" in the European Community drinking water directive should relate to individual samples and not to averages over a period. This is a technical point. It concerns the appearance of water supplied and does not have health implications.

Mr. Roberts: I do not accept the Secretary of State's last remark about this being a technical point. It is about the quality of drinking water and this question is about river quality. Will the Secretary of State confirm that over the past few years river quality in Britain has deteriorated because of pollution from sewage, animal slurry and nitrates and nitrites, mainly from agriculture? As well as getting into drinking water and being linked to stomach cancer, these pollutants flow via the rivers into the North sea, over-fertilise the photo plankton, de-oxygenate the North sea and create conditions in which fish cannot live. Will he act on the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Environment and on the recommendation in the final draft declaration of the recent North sea conference of Ministers, to which he was a signatory, to declare nitrate protection zones, or is the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food still holding up that declaration?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman's question is about nitrate levels in Britain's rivers. Nitrate levels in most rivers have remained fairly constant over the past 10 years. Very few water supplies with raised nitrate levels come from river sources. The hon. Gentleman asked about the progress of the North sea conference, which I chaired last week. I can tell him that we agreed on a substantial reduction in inputs of nutrients, which include nitrates, in those coastal and estuarial waters where nutrients are a serious problem. That means the shallow waters off Denmark and Germany and to some extent off Holland and not, on present evidence, British coastal waters. I am certainly considering whether to create nitrate protection zones and I expect soon to come to a decision.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is yet another example of the environmental disadvantages of the common agricultural policy? Does he further agree that if farm products were priced at a lower level farmers would no longer find it economically justified to put very large quantities of nitrogen on their crops?

Mr. Ridley: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is right. I certainly do not think that this is a question with which to put into doubt our membership of the Community, which seems to be what my hon. Friend was doing. As farm incomes decline, I think that the farmer will be tempted to use more nitrates to try to bring about increased production at reduced cost.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the legal advice to which the Secretary of State refers any better than that which is usually given to him?

Mr. Ridley: It is all impeccably good.

London Docklands

4. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to publish a report on the London Docklands Development Corporation's work on regeneration of the London Docklands.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC itself publishes reports on an annual basis. It is required by statute to lay the annual report before Parliament. The reports have shown the enormous success which has been achieved within the London Docklands area.

Mr. Alexander: Is it not the case that, had it not been for the London Docklands Development Corporation, areas of otherwise very poor and derelict land would largely have remained so—thanks to the inactivity of the various councils that were administering them at the time? Does not the success of the LDDC since then point the way towards the regeneration of many other areas of our inner cities?

Mr. Trippier: That is correct, and that is why I was surprised to hear the amazing statement of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) during a debate in the House a few weeks ago to the effect that the massive development in Docklands would have taken place had a Labour Government been in power, which is stretching credulity to breaking point.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister ensure that the next LDDC report explains the extraordinary behaviour of the Secretary of State in sacking the vice-chairman of the LDDC, when the main target has gone completely untouched? Will the report explain how it is that 10 weeks ago people such as Mr. Martin Berney could be convicted of the offence of being an unlicensed estate agent in Docklands? Is he aware that the fraud squad is investigating property transactions and sales in Docklands and all sorts of matters which do not feature in the annual report? It does not disclose the sordid money-making schemes or the unaccountability, all of which is the domain of the Secretary of State, who is taking no interest in getting to the bottom of these scandals.

Mr. Trippier: It is grossly unfair of the hon. Gentleman to accuse my right hon. Friend of acting unfairly with regard to the dismissal of the vice-chairman of the LDDC board. The position as the hon. Gentleman may understand, is that information was brought to my right hon. Friend's attention only recently. He acted as he did because we now know that some of the information did not reveal that, subsequent to the vice-chairman's appointment, he had been prosecuted for a number of criminal offences. Prior to his appointment as vice-chairman of the board he was asked about liquidations, but no mention was made of the impending prosecutions. He was prosecuted and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, found guilty and fined. As a result, and because he did not tell the Department or the LDDC board, my right hon. Friend acted as he did. I would have thought that my right hon. Friend would receive the support of the House in his action.

Mr. Speaker: That goes a bit wide of the question.

Mr. Squire: As to the main objects of the LDDC, will my hon. Friend confirm that a substantial number of those housed within the area were previously on council waiting lists? Does not the amount of private investment, attracted by public investment, serve as a model for the rest of the country?

Mr. Trippier: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. Some 12,000 new homes have been completed or are under construction. That has lifted the rate of owner-occupation in Docklands from 5 per cent. in 1981 to 29 per cent. in April 1987, and 22 purchasers of homes were former council tenants.

Rating Reform

5. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had to his plans for safety netting the poll tax in the metropolitan districts of the west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): We have pointed out, in response to a number of inquiries, that there is nothing new about the principle of a temporary safety net, which has always been part of the Government's proposals. Initial contributions to the safety net reflect resource transfers under the present system, but there will be a phased reduction of these distortions so that they are totally eliminated by 1994.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister deny that the Conservative Opposition leader in Birmingham, Councillor Hales, has sent what he describes as a rocket to the Secretary of State for turning the safety net in Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands into a surcharge? Will the Minister and his Department cease their vendetta once and for all against the city of Birmingham? The west midlands has been a soft touch long enough for the Government.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is being a little slower than normal on the uptake. On 1 April 1987 my right hon. Friend first declared what the safety net was to be in Birmingham, on 1986-87 figures. The exemplification shows that the safety net was £65. The present exemplification shows that it will be £63. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition of what Conservative Members have been saying for a long time — the resource equalisation process is extremely unfair. We are committed to removing that unfairness over a four-year period. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is unfair and must be removed.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Has my hon. Friend's master yet to reply to Councillor Hales, the Conservative leader on the city council, who talked about his sense of incredulity and outrage at the way that Birmingham is being treated? Does he think that a man of that stature would say such things unless they were true? Why is Birmingham to be penalised when it has been penalised already? Why change one unjust tax for what is possibly an even more unfair tax?

Mr. Chope: I am sorry to have to tell my hon. Friend that I think that he has completely missed the point. We are removing an unjust system, resource equalisation, but we shall phase it out over a four-year period. I cannot answer for those who did not realise that that would happen when the information was provided in a parliamentary answer in April to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

Water Meters

6. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost of installing water meters in every household.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): There are no current plans to install water meters in every household. Ultimately it will be up to each water undertaker to decide whether investment in more widespread metering is worth while. The proposed compulsory metering trials will help to estimate the sorts of costs involved.

Mr. Barron: Given that in the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill the Minister has obviously decided that the initial costs will not fall solely on consumers, as money will come from central Government, will he assure us that if universal metering is adopted there will be central Government help so that the burden does not fall on the water consumers?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman raised two points. With regard to the latter, no water authority has proposals at present for universal metering. In response to his other point, he is correct to state that a proportion — approximately 50 per cent.—of the metering trial costs will be paid for by the Government. Spread across all customers in England and Wales, the metering trials will add approximately 5p a year for four years to the average householder's bill for water and sewerage. We hope that savings will offset that.

Mr. Forman: Would not the gradual introduction of metering into water charging be consistent with the general principle of charging that the Government are now extending to local government? Does my hon. Friend have any estimates of the relative advantages of adopting that route as opposed to the present route, which is based on rateable value?

Mr. Moynihan: The whole purpose of developing the specific compulsory metering trials is to identify across socio-economic groups the effect of water metering and how effective that would be as a basis for charging in

future. My hon. Friend will agree that it is important that we await the outcome of the scientific evidence and detailed analysis of consumption figures based on the trials before we reach any specific assessment of future charging methods.

Mr. Morgan: Is the Minister fully aware that with gas and electricity — the nearest analogous industries to water—80 per cent. of the costs vary with consumption, but with water only 10 per cent. of the cost varies with consumption, the remainder being capital? Therefore, what relationship can water metering possibly have with controlling consumption?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that in other industries standing chargs cover the overhead and fixed costs. We are concerned about metering the consumption and we believe that it would be a far more accurate guide to measure and update consumption figures to assess whether water metering is the best way to move forward. Like the hon. Gentleman, I am aware that the Welsh Water authority is concerned about that. It has very high overhead and infrastructural costs. It is looking carefully at a form of charging that does not take into account the extent of unit consumption that other water authorities are considering.

Mr. Boswell: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be possible to start by introducing compulsory metering in new houses?

Mr. Moynihan: The simple answer is 'yes'. For that reason we have introduced an amendment to be considered during the latter stages of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill currently in Committee.

Water Charges

7. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being undertaken on alternative methods of charging for water if rates are abolished.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the water industry is currently studying a number of options for charging for water services once domestic rateable values are abolished, and I expect to receive its conclusions shortly.

Mr. Vaz: Bearing in mind what the Secretary of State said on 21 October this year in the House, is he still considering the possibility of introducing a tap tax? Is he aware that when a window tax was introduced in 1697 it resulted in many people having to brick up their windows and that eventually the tax was abolished in 1851? Is he as concerned as I am at the social implications, expecially for the elderly, of introducing such a tax?

Mr. Moynihan: There is no intention whatsoever of introducing a tap tax. However, it is important that water authorities look in detail at all the options on tariffs and charging for the future. Obviously, that covers a wide range of issues from flat-rate charges to metering. It is highly unlikely, if not improbable in the extreme, that there could be an accurate form of charging in the future that is based on the number of taps in premises, not least because there could be two taps for hot and cold water in one bath, but one tap for both in another.

Mr. Tim Smith: Instead of a tap tax, surely the most sensible method of charging for water would be to charge for the water that has been consumed? What estimates has my hon. Friend had made of the likely fall in total consumption if we were to have universal metering? In other words, how much water is wasted at the moment?

Mr. Moynihan: I agree with my hon. Friend that the present rating system is an unsound basis for charging and that it would be far better to move to the obvious method of charging by meter. Water loss differs across the country, as my hon. Friend is aware. However, it is estimated to be anything up to 30 per cent. of the water in the system. Obviously, that is an important issue, which is being tackled with great effectiveness by the water authorities.

Ms. Walley: Will the Minister confirm that a large amount of money has already been spent by each of the water authorities to pave the way for privatisation and that the cost of that, with which we have not been involved, will be included in the water charges that customers will have to pay in the future?

Mr. Moynihan: Any expenditure by the water authorities, including any that involves consultation, as in the exercises that are currently taking place with consumers about the possibility of metering trials, must be costed and brought before the House, and is always open to challenge by audit. The hon. Lady knows that, because it was discussed in Committee. Information on the specific amounts that have been spent on preparation for privatisation is not held centrally, but I understand that some of my hon. Friends have already written to water authorities on that subject.

Sir John Farr: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the alternative is likely to be metered water supplies, it will be of critical importance that cheap meters are available to elderly and poor people? Will he look into that problem, because at the moment the cost of metering is way beyond the reach of the average person?

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the need to test different types of meters during the current trials to ensure that a cheap, efficient and effective meter is eventually in place. Therefore, it is important to test a range of meters, including the present mechanical rotary piston meter, which will be used in the trials and in general metering in the foreseeable future.

Mr. O'Brien: Is it not a fact that the only alternative to universal metering — the Minister says that as yet the Government have not made any provisions for universal metering—is an additional poll tax? On water loss, is it not a fact that between 25 and 30 per cent. of the water in the system is going to waste and that that should be arrested? As for alternative charges, will the Minister have regard to the installation and location costs of the meters, the life of the meter and its renewal, the reading and billing of the meters, their maintenance costs, the standing charges for water and sewerage, and a possible standing charge for environmental services? Is the Minister aware that substantial costs are involved in the alternatives to the present system?

Mr. Moynihan: I regret that the hon. Gentleman did not hear some of my earlier answers. Had he been listening, he would have heard me confirm that the leakage in the system was too high and that it was being tackled by the water authorities, and that the community charge was certainly not the only alternative to metering. I mentioned that a flat-rate charge was one of many ways

being considered by the Water Authorities Association. The hon. Gentleman spoke about a range of important issues to be taken into account on further metering trials. He will be aware that every one is being considered carefully and discussed in great detail during the Committee stage of the Bill.

Severn-Trent Water Authority

8. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Severn-Trent water authority; and what subjects will be discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: My noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water met the chairman of Severn-Trent water authority on 27 November. My right hon. Friend expects to meet him, with the other water authority chairmen, in January and I intend to visit the authority and some of its operational sites in the new year. No doubt we shall discuss our proposals for a National Rivers Authority and the excellent prospects of the water authorities for privatisation.

Mr. Howarth: Is my hon. Friend aware that the chairman, Mr. John Bellak, is both diligent and competent —indeed, one might describe him as a good bloke—and that under his leadership the Severn-Trent water authority looks forward immensely to being in the van of privatisation? When my hon. Friend meets Mr. Bellak, will he tell Mr. Bellak that he will rise even further in our estimation if he brings about the new Cannock sewage works in 1993, if not in 1991?

Mr. Moynihan: I shall certainly relay my hon. Friend's latter point to Mr. Bellak when I meet him. I place on record the view of everyone in the water industry and hon. Members on both sides that Mr. Bellak is not only diligent and competent, but has a first-rate management team to support him.

Mr. Allan Roberts: When the Minister meets the chairman of the Severn-Trent water authority, will he discuss the Department of the Environment study No. 23? According to it, nitrate levels are rising in 100 water sources in Anglia and the Severn-Trent area, in 41 out of 125 ground water sources in the Severn-Trent area nitrates already exceed EC directive levels of 50 mls, and 1·8 million people are drinking nitrate polluted water. Will the Minister point out that water metering installations on a compulsory basis will cost more than £2 billion and that it would cost only £200 million to remove nitrates from water?

Mr. Moynihan: All water authorities must take important investment decisions to meet both our quota and European directive requirements. I shall certainly discuss with Mr. Bellak the important action that is being taken by his water authority to tackle the nitrate problem.

Rating Reform

9. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from businesses in the north of England concerning his proposals for a unified business rate.

Mr. Chope: There is an enthusiastic welcome for our proposals, which will restore a fair basis of rating and relieve many businesses from the excesses of high-spending authorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is correct. Is he aware that business people in my constituency are greatly looking forward to the unified business rate? It will save them the problem each year of facing a Left-wing Labour council's rates increases at some 26 per cent. and threats of higher rate levels. Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents are envious of other counties where rates are considerably lower? Is he aware that rates are an important part of a business's on-costs and that the sooner we have a fair system throughout the country and remove power from the commissars in the town halls, the better?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I only hope that some day Opposition Members will understand how right he is.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Minister accept that while there may be a welcome in the north of England for the proposed unified business rate, if he moves north of the border he will find great anxiety, particularly among small businesses, which have already been subjected to three revaluations since 1973? Will he, therefore, look in particular at the proposals and comments made by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, particularly those from Scotland?

Mr. Chope: That question should really be put to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Gow: What messages of support for the uniform business rate has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received from our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Chope: I am not aware that any such representations have been made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: While I recognise that business people in Cumbria will pay 20 per cent. less under the unified business rate, is there not a cost? Is it not true that, under the poll tax — the compensating tax; the new rating system in effect—people in Cumbria, particularly west Cumbria, will find that their new rates are double or treble the previous amount? Will not the unified business rate mean that, while rates may be substantially reduced in areas outside the county of Cumbria, we shall lose our cutting edge as a Labour authority with low rating for businesses? Does that not mean that we shall no longer be able to attract business?

Mr. Chope: I do not agree with that at all. However, the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that Cumbria is a low-resource area. It has generally low rateable values, and at present it is being subsidised by the people of Birmingham. Often, poorer people in Birmingham are subsidising richer people in Cumbria. We think that that system is unfair, and that is why we want to do away with it.

Mr. Burns: Will my hon. Friend tell us whether, once the uniform business rate is in position, there will be any business ratepayer's consultations, as exist at present under the Rates Act 1984?

Mr. Chope: We have received representations from the Confederation of British Industry on that subject, and we

are seriously considering the future role for consultations. We consider it important that there should be continuing consultation between business and local authorities, because so many local authority decisions will affect businesses.

Dr. Cunningham: As the alleged enthusiastic welcome for a uniform business rate does not include the CBI, the Institute of Directors, the National Chamber of Trade, the Forum of Private Business Ltd., the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses or the London Chamber of Commerce, all of which bodies oppose it, will the Minister tell us who supports it?

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman misrepresents the position. For example, the CBI has accepted that the new system that we are proposing is a significant improvement on the existing one. Its only quarrel is that it feels that the excess amount by which extra payments have had to be raised from business over the past few years should be removed at a stroke. The proposal has many supporters in business.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my hon. Friend agree that, while there is concern in my part of the world about the domestic part of the rate reform, businesses — especially in Yorkshire—welcome the unified business rate because it is likely to lead to a reduction of some 20 per cent. in their rates?

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. Many businesses warmly welcome the prospect of the stability that will result from the new arrangements and the fact that it will not be possible for business rates to go up by more than the rate of inflation. That is one of the great advantages of the new system.

Royal Docks

10. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision concerning the public inquiry in respect of planning applications for the redevelopment of the royal docks.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the hon. Member is referring to Rosehaugh Stanhope's application for the Royal Albert dock, I announced the decision not to call it in on 19 November.

Mr. Spearing: Irrespective of the merits of any local accommodation, does the Minister agree that that application is of great strategic importance? Can he tell us why his right hon. Friend did not take the advice of the London planning advisory committee to call it in? Is he not aware that, on the three sites, the total building could amount to between £3 billion and £4 billion, with a population of perhaps 10,000 residents, with as many jobs? Does not his leaving the matter to an unelected body appointed by the Secretary of State illustrate the Government's preference for authoritarian, centralised solutions?

Mr. Waldegrave: Obviously we considered carefully this large and important development. We took into account the views of the London borough of Newham, which approved the development, partly, I think, because there is a considerable amount of social housing proposed in it. In general the development fitted in with the London Docklands development strategy, and it carries forward the development of Docklands, which is generally welcomed in London. That is why we did not think it necessary to call in the application.

Urban Development Corporation

11. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received relating to his plans for the establishing of mini urban development corporations; and whether the urban areas such as those on Humberside will be eligible for designation.

Mr. Ridley: I have not yet decided which areas should be designated.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the designation of at least part of Humberside as a mini urban development corporation would go some way towards rejuvenating what is in essence one of the last great estuaries in Europe? Would not his agreement to this go a long way towards establishing the point that the Government are interested in the smaller urban areas, which are equally important as large ones? Does not he further agree that a better decision might be reached if the survey of derelict land was not six years out of date?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot announce any decisions about mini UDCs today, but I can tell my hon. Friend that Hull is receiving £5 million under the urban programme this year. To date 10 urban development grant projects have been approved, leading to a total investment of £16 million. My hon. Friend mentioned derelict land. Humberside should get £2·5 million in derelict land grants during this year. We recognise its problems, and it is getting a good share of the grants that are available.

Mr. Steen: While it is clear that urban development corporations and mini urban development corporations will improve the physical fabric of inner urban areas, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government need to do more to involve the people living in these areas in the regeneration process? Many of my hon. Friends believe that only by involving the people in helping themselves will the urban environment be regenerated.

Mr. Ridley: I have a great deal in common with my hon. Friend on that point. I agree with him. He will be aware of the other instruments that we are using—CATS, the task forces and the many activities under the urban programme — in support of the policy that he and I support. I invite him to go to one or two of the new urban development corporations to see the extent to which the local people who run those UDCs are involving the local community in their very successful activities.

Mr. Boyes: Is it not a fact that the CBI, at its November conference, warned that the Government's inner-city initiatives would fail if they bypassed local councils? Is it not a fact also that urban development corporations and mini urban development corporations are designed to do exactly that?

Mr. Ridley: I put the problems of inner cities higher than the susceptibilities of councils. It may be necessary to bypass councils where they are the problem rather than the solution, but it is more important to help the areas and the people who live in them than to accept the susceptibilities of councils.

National Rivers Authority

12. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the size and scope of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Ridley: The period for comments on the consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority has now ended. I expect to make a further announcement on its shape and operations this month.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that typically helpful reply. However, does he accept that it is important that water authorities restructure themselves as early as possible prior to privatisation? Therefore, it would be helpful to them to receive a comprehensive response when my right hon. Friend makes his announcement.

Mr. Ridley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I want to press on with this very quickly, which is why I hope to give the Government's response before the end of the month. It is very important that we should engage the water authorities in active preparations from the beginning of next year. I hope that the Bill will soon be operating, to enable them to co-operate with us.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Secretary of State accept that he faces a predicament on the staffing of the National Rivers Authority, when the water authority chairmen have told him that he needs 20,000 people, not 2,000 people, if the water industry is to be properly regulated?

Mr. Ridley: I must say that the water authorities have different views about whether they think the physical functions for which the NRA will be responsible should be done by the NRA, the water authorities or contracted out. There are three options, and that is the crucial matter that has to be resolved in my response. Estimates of an enormously bureaucratic NRA are totally wide of the mark. We seek to have the minimum body consistent with its responsibilities, which will be very heavy to discharge.

Housing Investment Programme

14. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why his invitation to local authorities to bid for extra housing investment programme allocations in 1987-88 permits the purchase of temporary hostels for the homeless but excludes bids for the purchase of permanent homes for them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities' first priority must be to get existing stock into use, for both long-term and short-term use, before they start acquiring more. Meanwhile, it must be right to get families in particular out of bed-and-breakfast accommodation and into better short-stay housing.

Mr. McFall: With £800 million underspent on local authorities' capital expenditure this year, how can the Secretary of State justify a further cut in expenditure next year for housing capital allocations? How is it that on the very day that the recent Autumn Statement was published we had the spectacle of the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing increased provision for housing investment next year, while the Secretary of State announced reductions in housing capital allocation for next year?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member should note that capital allocations decline in importance every year. Over half the spending power of housing authorities comes from receipts. Although allocations will be 6 per cent. lower next year, gross spending will be 4 per cent. higher.

Mr. Jack: On behalf of the people of Fylde I thank my hon. Friend for the additional moneys that I understand he will provide to help local authorities which have a particular burden because of Parkinson frame houses and similar housing problems in this financial year. Does he have plans for a similar helpful response, should that problem recur in the next financial year?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is certainly a high priority of my right hon. Friend's Department to get this problem out of the way once and for all. If it is possible to make additional allocations within the constraints that we have we shall make them, as we have in the past.

Nirex

15. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next hopes to meet the chairman of Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

18. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of Nirex; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Ridley: I have discussions with the chairman of Nirex from time to time, but I have at present no plans to meet him.

Dr. Thomas: Does the Minister recall that in the public presentation to hon. Members the chairman of Nirex and his colleagues explained that public acceptability was one of the criteria for a drilling programme? Will the Minister accept that there is no public acceptability in Scotland or Wales, which are the main targets for the current drilling programme? Will he therefore announce to the House today, in the way that he announced for England on 1 May, that the Nirex drilling programme will not proceed?

Mr. Ridley: My estimation is that public acceptability is about the same throughout the United Kingdom, but I would not like to comment on any locality. I would prefer the hon. Gentleman to make his representations to the board members of Nirex, because they are carrying out the consultation.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that the document published by Nirex caused great alarm to many people, especially the constituents of Southport, and that action groups are now being formed? Will he ensure, when he speaks to the chairman of Nirex, that he emphasises that consultation beforehand might have helped?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure the hon. Gentleman, with his level-headed responsibility, will do his best to reassure his constituents. The consultation document has been published. I cannot see how he can call for consultation on a consultation document.

Sir Michael Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the chairman of Nirex that it is greatly appreciated that he is fulfilling his undertaking as quickly as possible to consult my constituents and other hon. Members' constituents in north Yorkshire about their strong, valid objections to deposits being made in that region? Furthermore, will he assure me that the intention not to deposit such wastes in a national park will hold equally true for the coastal waters off national parks?

Mr. Ridley: I sometimes think that it would be best if we had 650 supplementary questions on this matter, and then we would all be back where we started.

Mr. Cryer: Does not the controversy surrounding the disposal of radioactive waste demonstrate the Government's foolishness in embarking on yet a further nuclear power station construction programme at a cost of £2 billion? Would it not be more sensible if the Secretary of State got hold of the Secretary of State for Energy and told him what a lunatic idea it is, and got hold of the Prime Minister and got her to offer a site in Dulwich for the nuclear waste that already exists?

Mr. Ridley: I must introduce the hon. Gentleman to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who basically support the disposal of nuclear waste and the programme at Sellafield and elsewhere. I should be delighted to introduce the hon. Members to each other.

Sir Ian Lloyd: Has my right hon. Friend by any chance seen the quite deplorable advertisement in today's *Daily Telegraph* by an organisation called Greenpeace? It implies that anyone who disagrees with the Government's radioactive waste discharge policy should be entitled to block the discharge, regardless of the consequences at Sellafield. Does he agree that it is quite impossible for any organised, civilised society to proceed on the basis that a bunch of anarchists, who have no regard for either the complexity of the issues with which they are dealing or the consequences of their policy, should decide our nuclear policy?

Mr. Ridley: I regret that I have not seen the advertisement. Perhaps I should say that I am glad I have not seen it, in view of what my hon. Friend said about it.

Empty Residential Property

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation which obliges public or private owners of empty residential property to accept proposals for its use presented by housing associations, community groups or groups of people in housing need.

Mr. Waldegrave: No, but we are encouraging better use of the existing housing stock in the private sector by our proposals for deregulation in the Housing Bill and in the public sector by allocating resources through Estate Action, the housing associations programme and, more recently, the extra £25 million, which we are targeting on homelessness.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister look carefully at the Empty Property and Community Aid Bill, which was launched and sponsored by Shelter, IYSH, the empty property unit, and the empty property campaign just a week ago? Will he seriously consider whether we could amend the Housing Bill during its passage through the House to allow some of the empty property in private and public use to be used for short-term purposes to alleviate existing massive homelessness?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that all hon. Members will support the intention behind the Bill. I shall certainly look closely at the provisions of the Bill. Some of them do not seem to be practicable, but others may be possible.

Mr. Maples: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are about as many empty properties as homeless families in London? Will he consider encouraging, or perhaps even compelling, local authorities to sell empty properties to people who are on their waiting lists if such properties have been empty for more than, say, six months?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is an element of compulsion in the Bill to which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred. My hon. Friend mentioned the unacceptably high number of empty properties. There are bound to be some, but it is accurate to say that it is an unacceptably high number of empty properties. At the moment we are still proceeding by means of carrots rather than sticks. That is why we have been offering more allocations to local authorities to get many homes at least back into temporary use. We shall have to consider ideas of the more draconian kind that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Shared Ownership

17. **Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific encouragement he is proposing to give to housing associations, building societies and other financial institutions to develop shared ownership schemes particularly in the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, designed to make it easier for shared ownership to be entirely privately financed, have just been laid before the House. We take every opportunity to promote shared ownership schemes.

Mr. Hunt: I welcome that reply. Is my hon. Friend aware that for young people in my constituency such a scheme offers the only real chance that many of them will ever have of getting their foot on the home ownership ladder? Therefore, will he try to instil a greater sense of urgency and priority into the agencies to which the Government are looking to provide such schemes?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the spirit of what my hon. Friend said. To be fair, local authorities and housing associations have made considerable use of the shared ownership route in recent years. On the private sector, I pay tribute to the main building society that has been involved, the Halifax. It has been trying to develop schemes. We could do with many more schemes from the private sector.

Sir George Young: In view of the buoyancy of house prices in London, will my hon. Friend reconsider the house price limits that apply to shared ownership schemes and see whether local authority, do-it-yourself shared ownership has been accidentally precluded by the recently published Housing Bill?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall certainly consider my hon. Friend's question. I draw attention to the new scheme that is being tried out in Tower Hamlets, where the local authority and private developers are putting together self-build schemes. They have rather the same effect and are very interesting.

Housing Investment Programme

20. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the percentage reduction in the housing investment programme allocation for 1988-89.

Mr. Waldegrave: As local authority spending power from capital receipts continues to increase, capital allocations decline in importance. So, while total housing investment programme allocations for 1988-89 will be 6 per cent. lower than for 1987-88, gross provision for local authorities housing capital expenditure will be increased by 4 per cent. to £3,048 million.

Mrs. Mahon: Is the Minister aware that in my local authority area £80 million of capital investment is needed to put council housing back into good repair and that, because the Government have stopped improvement grants, we are in danger of having to pull down very good private stock?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady is quite wrong to say that we have stopped improvement grants. In real terms, the value and number of improvement grants has increased many times since we came to power in 1979. I emphasise that receipts can be capitalised and used for repairs by local authorities, and local authorities should do that.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the houses built in new towns and in the 1950s and 1960s are in relatively poor condition? That is especially true in Skelmersdale new town. Will my hon. Friend put his mind to improving the housing improvement investment programme in that area — specifically for West Lancashire district council?

Mr. Waldegrave: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but he will understand that there are a number of similar claims on the programme.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that the answer that he gave a few moments ago does not address the problem? Many local authorities cannot give improvement grants or, indeed, accept applications for improvement grants, with the result that many northern terraced houses are decaying and becoming derelict. In the long run that will cost more, because they will have to be pulled down. Even allowing for the extra allocation to which he referred, and taking capital receipts and the housing investment programme allocation into account, is it not time that more money was made available? Should we not allow more capital receipts to be spent to try to solve the problem?

Mr. Waldegrave: On repairs, there is no limit on the spending of capital receipts. More is now being spent than was the case. For example, the development of enveloping schemes, which are relevant to constituencies such as the hon. Gentleman's, has come on apace in recent years.

Urban Development Corporations

21. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the locations of the first mini urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

23. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many mini urban development corporations he proposes to create; and when he will announce the location of the first.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given by my right hon. Friend earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran).

Mr. Bowis: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. May I express the hope that the announcement will be made soon and that when it comes it will include many parts of the country—not just inner cities but other urban areas? That should be welcomed by local authorities of all political persuasions throughout the country because of the success of the development corporations to date.

Mr. Trippier: There is no harm in saying that we have looked not just at the inner cities but at the inner urban areas catalogued in the 57 programme authorities that are our principal responsibilities at the Department of the Environment. I confirm what I said last week, that the announcement will be made before the end of the year.

Mr. Bevan: When he considers these matters, will my hon. Friend consider the participation, not just of the communities and the people in them, but of the smaller firms and institutions, in a phoenix-style partnerships?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend's point about phoenix-style partnerships is valid. We have been approached with applications for urban regeneration grant and urban development grant and for a number of our other grant regimes. The URG and UDG have acted in a catalytic role to attract private developers to make applications to the Department for those grant regimes. Certainly I have no doubt that the grants will play an effective part in the existing UDCs and in the mini UDCs yet to be announced.

County Structure Plans (Housing)

24. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy, when the number of houses actually built in a given area represents a substantial increase in the projected figures for that area in the existing county structure plan, to take this into account in his assessment of any structure plan review emanating from the relevant county; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is already my right hon. Friend's policy, when considering proposals for housing provision in submitted alterations to county structure plans, to take account of all relevant factors, including past building rates, before deciding whether to approve or modify the proposed figures.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but does he recognise that some of the figures for parts of the county of Dorset, especially the south-east, have been swollen and distorted by appeals? Will my hon. Friend reconfirm his commitment to the green belt, and will he confirm that it is not the Government's policy to scatter new towns over areas such as Dorset? In passing, will my hon. Friend welcome the speech by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in which he referred to the tyranny of developers? That feeling is well understood by many of my constituents.

Mr. Waldergrave: I unequivocally reaffirm the Government's commitment to the green belt. However, I believe that my hon. Friend will recognise that some of the

decisions taken in his area have been welcomed. I repeat that existing figures will be taken into account in the future run of developments. I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend about the interesting and, I believe, positive speech, by the Prince of Wales.

Firearms White Paper

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposed new controls on firearms. Those are described in the White Paper entitled "Firearms Act 1968 : Proposals for Reform" that has been published today.

The House will recall that, in a debate on 26 October, I outlined the main conclusions of our review of firearms controls. Both before and since the debate there have been a number of other fatal incidents involving the use of guns. This reinforces us in the belief that it is time to strengthen the controls.

The law cannot guarantee against criminal behaviour, nor can it protect us against the individual who, having complied with all the requirements, loses control in a fit of madness. But we can seek to reduce the risk. A substantial shift is needed in the balance which has to be struck between safeguarding the public at large and protecting the interests of legitimate gun users.

The main responsibility of Government must be to secure, as far as possible, the safety of the public from the irresponsible or criminal use of firearms. But we must also take account of those who regularly use guns in a safe and responsible way in the course of their work or chosen sport. We have sought to accommodate the needs and interests of the legitimate shooting community wherever possible, providing this does not compromise our fundamental concern to give adequate protection to the community at large. Those who disagree, who would seek to remove entirely from private hands a wide range of firearms, misunderstand the nature of the problem. Certainly there are some types of especially dangerous weapon that we cannot allow the private individual to possess, and I have taken steps to prohibit more of those. But beyond that it would be wrong to deprive people— the farmer, sportsman, target shooter — of their weapons. Rather, we must ensure that they are subject to a degree of control and scrutiny that offers a real safeguard against abuse.

Let me briefly summarise our proposals. We intend to bring within the prohibited category full-bore, self-loading rifles; burst fire weapons; and short-barrelled, self-loading or pump action shotguns. Those are weapons that, for the most part, have no legitimate sporting use and which possess a rate of fire and a magazine capacity which make them especially lethal. We shall prohibit the movement of a firearm or shotgun into a less strictly controlled category by means of conversion. Pump action and self-loading shotguns, of normal length, which have a greater fire capability than traditional shotguns, are to be brought under the same controls as now exist for rifles and pistols under section 1 of the 1968 Act.

On penalties, the Criminal Justice Bill increases the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime to life imprisonment; and raises the maximum for being in possession of a shotgun without a certificate, in line with parallel firearms offences.

We shall be arranging a firearms amnesty to provide for illegally held or unwanted firearms to be taken out of circulation. There is to be a statutory safekeeping requirement for shotguns. We shall close the gap in controls whereby visitors to Great Britain may purchase and use shotguns without a certificate. We have given considerable further thought to the question of further controls over traditional shotguns, that is, those that will remain under section 2 controls. I have decided that they should remain in a separate category from rifles and pistols but that the safekeeping requirement on its own is not enough. At present a chief officer of police must grant a shotgun certificate unless he has reason to believe the applicant is prohibited by the Act from possessing a shotgun, or that to allow him to do so would endanger the public safety or peace. I propose to change the onus so that in future the chief officer will have to satisfy himself as far as possible that an applicant is not disqualified by these factors — and that will include the discretion to undertake inspections of security arrangements.

In addition, chief officers will be able to refuse to issue or renew a certificate where they are satisfied that an applicant does not have a good reason for possessing or acquiring a shotgun. We need to take this precaution against the danger of a steady build-up of shotgun holding without any sporting or professional justification. But we intend that these justifications should be widely and reasonably drawn. In most cases the reason for holding a shotgun will be readily apparent and inquiries will not be necessary as a matter of routine. But where it is not, the scope will exist, in a way that it does not now, for the police to make further inquiries. The onus will be on the chief officer, and there will be a right of appeal to the Crown court against refusal of a certificate.

I also propose that all shotguns should be listed on the certificate by a serial number or description. It is not sensible that the police should have no precise information on the number and type of shotguns which are properly held in their force area. Finally, anyone seeking to purchase shotgun ammunition will in future need to produce a valid certificate in order to do so, and the more lethal types of shotgun cartridge will be subject to stricter control.

The White Paper also outlines our proposals in respect of gun clubs, firearms dealers and a number of other matters. We intend to strengthen the existing approval scheme for gun clubs and put it on a new statutory footing. This is important not least because membership of such a club is often a consideration in deciding whether a firearms certificate should be issued. We intend that the status of firearms dealer will in future be confined to those who can establish that dealing in firearms is a substantial commercial or business activity. Dealers will be required to maintain detailed records of transactions for a substantial time to help police in tracing illegally held firearms.

Miscellaneous proposals include the power to require a firearm or shotgun certificate to bear a photograph; the categorisation of stun guns as prohibited weapons; the regularisation of the position of museums which hold collections of firearms; and better control over the movements of firearms from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

The White Paper is the result of a careful and detailed scrutiny of the current controls. It takes account of consultations that we have had with a wide range of interested bodies. We have brought forward the White Paper in advance of the Bill in order to give all concerned, and especially legitimate shooters, a further opportunity to assimilate and comment on our proposals. The main proposals will stand, but when it comes to legislation we

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

will continue to listen carefully to detailed comment, because we want this to be a measure which will last for at least 15 to 20 years, for the good reason that its substance is sound.

In all, the proposals that we are putting forward offer a tighter system of control, with more accountability for those who buy, possess or deal in firearms or shotguns. They will help the police to maintain effective control over the possession and movement of firearms. They will place some additional burdens and restrictions on the legitimate shooting community, but I have tried to keep these to a minimum and I am confident that they will be accepted by sensible shooters as reasonable and justified.

All the measures are clearly focused on our central aim of ensuring effective control over potentially lethal weapons. They are a small price to pay for safeguarding the community as a whole. I shall introduce a Bill putting them into effect within the next few weeks, and I believe that the Bill will have the overwhelming support of this House.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Is the Home Secretary aware that the Opposition welcome his statement and the White paper on which it is based? Perhaps that is not altogether a complete surprise to him, since he has adopted so many of the proposals that we made in the debate that we initiated on 26 October. I propose to list some of them for the benefit of Conservative Members.

In that debate we called exactly for what the Home Secretary now describes as a substantial shift in the balance struck between safeguarding the public and protecting the legitimate user. In that debate we called for, and today I welcome, the prohibition of the ownership and sale of self-loading and pump action rifles and short-barrelled, smooth bore guns. We called for, and I welcome, the prohibition of the sale of burst fire weapons and stun guns. In that debate we called for, and I welcome today, an increase in the obligation which is placed on the owners of shotguns to store their weapons securely. Indeed, is the Home Secretary aware that we support the general and substantial extensions in shotgun control which he now recommends?

The Home Secretary's requirement that every shotgun should be individually identified on a certificate by serial number or by description means that the Government have accepted the need for the specific and individual certification of such guns. We proposed that during the debate on this subject five weeks ago and we welcome the Home Secretary's adoption of that policy.

But during that debate we also called for what I described as a change in the onus of proof. That appears today in the Home Secretary's White Paper, in different language, as the shifting of the balance of control. The language is unimportant. The intention and the change in policy is important. It is much to be welcomed and is welcomed by us.

In paragraph 25 of the White Paper the Home Secretary says that the chief police officer

"will in future be able to refuse . . . a shotgun certificate where he is satisfied that the applicant does not have a good reason for having a shotgun".

In the debate on 26 October, at column 67 of *Hansard*, the Under-Secretary explicitly rejected the "good reason" requirement and criterion. Will the Home Secretary accept our congratulations on the good sense of his conversion to the idea that anyone who possesses a shotgun must, if necessary, demonstrate his or her good reason for doing so.

Indeed, in only one major particular has the Home Secretary failed to support the proposals that we made on 26 October. There is nothing in the White Paper or in his proposals about the prohibition of, reduction in, or control of mail order sales. Mail order sales represent the one real remaining loophole, the one real opportunity, to evade the tighter controls that the Home Secretary now proposes, which we have advocated and which we support. Why has he not included a provision on mail order sales? Having stood up as bravely as he has to the gun lobby, I should have hoped that he would stand up to the mail order lobby as well. That is the only omission from a generally welcome document and I hope that the Home Secretary will accept our assurance that we shall support him when he brings it to the House in legislative form at the first and earliest opportunity.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman gives an amazing account of history. When he lists the things that he called for on 26 October, he omits to state that I had already said that most of them were our policy beforehand. He was fairly safe in calling for them as I had already said that the great majority of them, which he has carefully listed again today, were our policy.

But there is a difference of approach between us. Throughout, in his speeches and in print, the right hon. Gentleman has been pressing me to rush into some form of emergency legislation. He has been accusing me of protracted negotiations with the gun lobby, but we have been trying to consult and to get the detail as right as we can. We are now entering another phase before we lay a Bill before the House — I hope to do that before Christmas—during which comment will be able to be made on matters of detail. On 26 October the right hon. Gentleman took a lofty, scornful line on shooters. He talked of prosperous adults hanging around country pubs, until he was brought up short by at least three of his hon. Friends who carefully explained that shooting was not confined to the middle, upper and rural classes. I think that the right hon. Gentleman has been busy rewriting history——

Mr. Hattersley: The reason.

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to that. We are not putting shotguns on the same basis as section 1 firearms as regards "good reason". The onus will be on the chief officers. I do not want the police or shooters to get involved in endless routine discussions about reason. We shall try in the Bill to set out what "good reason" can be. I want to be able to respond to the real concern of the police—not least in some of our cities—that people are beginning to own and store shotguns with no other reason than an argument about self-defence. We need some way of dealing with that without involving people in all the rigmarole that would follow from putting shotguns on a section 1 basis in the way that the right hon. Gentleman would like.

I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman has made his case about mail order. Although this point strays outside the subject of firearms—it covers martial arts weapons and so on—we intend to prohibit the sale of certain things. When we do, their purchase by mail order, which has been one of the main causes for complaint, will

have been ruled out anyway; but when it remains entirely legitimate to sell something, I cannot see why a particular technique of sale — such as mail order — should be excluded, while others are not.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to spell out to the House and the country what will happen to the firearms that will become prohibited when the legislation is enacted?

Mr. Hurd: That will be connected with the amnesty. First, there will be a period during which people can legitimately dispose of these weapons through the international market. After a certain stage, when the commencement order takes effect—if our proposals are passed — those weapons will become prohibited and should be handed in together with any others that people want to hand in under the proposed amnesty.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I give a broad welcome to the proposals in the White Paper. However, has the right hon. Gentleman borne fully in mind the widespread use of normal pump action shotguns for sporting purposes in the country? Will he confirm that police officers will not only scrutinise the safekeeping of shotguns but be willing and ready to give advice — especially to farmers — on the safekeeping of shotguns and how that can best be done? Will he ensure that application forms for shotgun certificates are clear, and clearer than they have been in the past, asking questions that are devised to produce the information needed by chief officers of the police?

Finally, will the Home Secretary give an undertaking that, although he has rejected controls on mail order sale for now, the Government will continue to keep mail order sales under close scrutiny--because many of us believe that that there are abuses of the mail order system?

Mr. Hurd: I am well aware — some of my hon. Friends have pointed it out to me — that pump action shotguns of the normal length are used, for example, in clay pigeon shooting. I want to make it clear that there is no question in my mind of putting those weapons in the prohibited category. They will be in the section 1 category, together with rifles and pistols. I would think — we can go into this matter in greater depth later — that clay pigeon shooting would be an acceptable reason under section 1 if other conditions were met.

The hon. and learned Gentleman is right to say that safekeeping needs further definition. Of course, the police in most forces are already willing to give guidance on safekeeping. We need to work out with representatives of the shooting community more precisely how safekeeping should be defined, and then to give guidance to the police on how it should be dealt with. On a related point, I am also conscious that we need to deal with the worry about the transport of shotguns in this category. A legal case has caused anxiety on that point, and I am anxious to remove that worry, because the transport of shotguns is necessary and one does not want an unnecessary restriction on it in reasonable circumstances. I have nothing to add to what I have already said about mail order. Of course we watch all these things, but I do not see the grounds on principle in which action against mail order in particular could be taken.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Bearing in mind that the police, with whom I have a connection, would have preferred my right hon. Friend to do more, whereas the shooters that I represent in East Anglia would have preferred him to do less, I welcome the balance that he has struck. I welcome especially what the White Paper says about arrangements to tighten the movement of guns to Northern Ireland, about the photographs that are to appear on the certificates, and about the new power of the police to screen applicants and to refuse shotgun certificates to those who are not fit. Can my right hon. Friend say how he proposes to match the names on the shotgun certificates to the guns to which they apply unless there is a numbering system? On behalf of the shooters, may I ask him to give his view on the principle of confiscation without compensation?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that my hon. Friend's sense of equilibrium has brought him to roughly the same position as mine. He asked about photographs. There is already in the Firearms Act 1968 a power that has never been used to require one photograph. We propose to ask for a power to require two photographs, but we need to work out more carefully than has so far been done with the shooting community and the police whether this can usefully be used with modern technology in order to improve security. However, I think that it is reasonable to have that power.

What we have in mind about details on the certificate is not what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) suggested on 26 October, that each weapon should have a separate certificate, now do we propose that there should be a limit on the number of guns on a certificate, but rather that each certificate should contain a description of the number of guns applied for and held. When ownership passes, that description should also pass. That is a reasonable start in acquiring the kind of knowledge that I think we need about the number of shotguns that are legally held.

My hon. Friend asked about compensation. This is a difficult question and we have spent a good deal of time on it. Over the years there have been many occasions on which the use of equipment that people own is rendered invalid. Therefore, its value is substantially reduced by Government action without compensation being paid. It would be difficult in principle and I think almost impossible in practice to work out a scheme for this. We must rely on the facts that people will have plenty of warning and that there is an international market. It is preferable that they should use those opportunities rather than that we should put together some scheme of compensation that would inevitably have more critics than friends.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House for brief questions. I think that I heard the Secretary of State say that there would be a debate in the near future.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I broadly welcome the Secretary of State's proposals. Does he agree that a matter of some considerable importance is the muzzle velocity at the time of exit? Has not the time come for us to look again at the definition of a firearm, especially bearing in mind that the muzzle velocity of some airguns and, indeed, some catapaults can be in excess of 100 miles an hour? They fire a metal projectile that will kill at up to 50 yards. Do we not need to look at that aspect of the matter?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman may be able to deploy that argument, but I prefer to confine myself to the scope of the 1968 Act and to maintaining the categories within it.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the responsible target and game shooting organisations are anxious to help the Home Secretary where he can prove that this measure will reduce crime? Does he accept that there is great resentment in the responsible shooting world because, despite requests, its members were not consulted before my right hon. Friend made his statement in September? Subsequently, their recommendations seem to have fallen on stony ground. Will my right hon. Friend comment on the fact that the police think that it will take 330,000 more man hours to fulfil some of his wishes? Has he taken that into account relative to the cost of firearms certificates, and would not policemen be better used on the beat to prevent crime? In the interests of clay pigeon shooting, will my right hon. Friend carefully reconsider the matter of self-loading shotguns that are able to fire only three shots—two in a magazine — otherwise clay pigeon shooting will pay a heavy penalty?

Mr. Hurd: We have consulted widely; my hon. Friend was one of those who were consulted. At some points—I am referring particularly to paragraph 17 of the White Paper—we have modified our proposals because of the detailed comments that the shooting community has put forward. Of course, most of the police would like us to go further. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said, they would like us to put all shotguns under section 1 provisions, as the Opposition has urged, but not least because of the problem of resources that my hon. Friend mentioned we have resisted that. In the next stage I shall be perfectly prepared to listen to further representations about pump action shotguns. In answer to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), I set out the reason why we have reached our decision, which is an understandable and reasonable one.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): To save me time in discussions with constituents, will the Secretary of State explain the criteria in paragraph 40? What is meant by "properly constituted" and "fit and proper persons"? I have to meet my constituents soon, and I do not understand the paragraph.

Mr. Hurd: We shall have to refine and develop that matter—*[Interruption.]* That is reasonable; we have set out the principle in the White Paper. We shall have to discuss with the clubs and shooting community what the qualifications are for a firing range. The phrase "fit and proper person", as the right hon. Gentleman knows, already exists in legislation, so I do not foresee any particular difficulty in that regard. We shall have to flesh out the proposal about clubs in paragraph 40.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will my right hon. Friend say how this will affect the ordinary working life of the farmer going about his everyday business?

Mr. Hurd: The effect on the ordinary shotgun owner will be that the police will be able to check when his or her certificate is issued or renewed that he is keeping his shotgun safely. When his certificate expires, he will need to list on his next application form the gun that he holds with serial numbers and/or a description. The police will then be able to ask him or her questions about reasons for holding a gun, if they feel doubtful about them. However, sport, profession and leisure activity will count as such good reasons. I do not think that, put like that, it is tyrannical or unreasonable.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Will the Secretary of State address the following three points? First and foremost, the cost of implementing this procedure will vastly increase the cost of a gun permit for the sportsman—probably by about 75 to 100 per cent. Secondly, does he agree that, unless police at each station have a specific role in dealing with the issuing of shotgun permits, his proposals are unlikely to work? The police will be required to devote a tremendous amount of time to this procedure, so that there will need to be an increase in establishment. Thirdly, does he agree that there will be a proliferation of clay pigeon clubs unless he lays down quite stringent regulations as to how they should be constituted?

Mr. Hurd: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. These proposals do not cover Northern Ireland. We have borne the cost of the proposals in mind when deciding how far we should go. They will result in an increase in fees for certificates. We shall reconvene the working group, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) knows, includes representatives of the shooting community, to work out what those should conveniently be. The reconvening of the working group is not dealt with in the White Paper, but I am glad to give that assurance. I note what the hon. Gentleman has said about clay pigeon clubs.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I again appeal for brief questions? We have a heavy Opposition day before us with two important debates. I will allow questions to continue for a further 15 minutes and then we must move on.

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Will my right hon. Friend consider the real possibility that, as his admirable proposals begin to bite, the irresponsible and criminal elements in society will find it more tempting to use weapons other than firearms? May we expect a complementary White Paper on offensive weapons generally and their greater control?

Mr. Hurd: We have covered my hon. Friend's point to a considerable extent in the proposals in the Criminal Justice Bill in respect of knives and martial arts weapons which may be offensive weapons.

Miss Fookes: And crossbows?

Mr. Hurd: I do not rule out action on crossbows. It is doubtful whether such action would fall within the scope of the Bill, but I do not rule out action in future if that appears sensible.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): What will happen to illegally held weapons that are handed in during an amnesty or in other ways? In the past, they have been recycled back into the community.

Mr. Hurd: The working group considering the amnesty must consider that in some detail. I have made inquiries about what happened in 1968 and have been told that the great majority of weapons handed in during the amnesty were destroyed by the police. However, there was a special

arrangement for weapons of particular value. I do not know how carefully that was defined then, but I will look into the precedent set by the Labour Government to see whether that is the right arrangement to follow in future.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My right hon. Friend's reasonable statement will be welcomed in Shropshire where game shooting particularly has crossed social and political barriers and is followed by the Labour chairman of the county council. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that, once the legislation has passed through Parliament, chief constables will be advised to apply the new legislation promptly and fairly and not in the rather maverick fashion in which they applied the Firearms Act 1968?

Mr. Hurd: There will clearly have to be more detailed guidance. I have referred to the transport of shotguns, and that must be carefully considered.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the Home Secretary's statement and particularly the firearms amnesty and the sensible safeguards for the storage of shotguns, control over their movements and the sale of ammunition, but will he think again about the problem of those who have lawfully and legally purchased weapons that are now to be on the prohibited list? Is he convinced that those who have legally bought such weapons will have a reasonable opportunity to recover the considerable sums that they have spent on them?

Mr. Hurd: They have time to make their arrangements. They are not in an entirely different position from, for example, the owner of industrial equipment that is outlawed or about to be outlawed or prohibited by factories and safety legislation. Indeed, their position is not dissimilar from those affected by environmental measures. Compensation is not normally paid in those circumstances.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Will my right hon. Friend accept that my constituents and I believe that his proposals strike a balance between protecting society and enabling the shooter to enjoy his sport? He will be aware that I gauge his proposals against the background of the massacre in Hungerford, which is in my constituency. In those terms, why has he decided not to limit the number of firearms that can be owned by any one person? He will be aware that Michael Ryan possessed no fewer than five firearms and several shotguns. It is clear that he used three of those weapons in that dreadful tragedy. If there were more control over weapons and he had possessed fewer weapons and less ammunition, I cannot help thinking that less damage would have been done to the population of Hungerford.

Mr. Hurd: I have read several times the admirable speech made by my hon. Friend on 26 October. The reason why we have not followed my hon. Friend's suggestion is that, having consulted the shooting community we were convincingly advised that in many shooting sports it is normal and perfectly reputable to have a wide range of weapons. It would be difficult to limit weapons on a certificate as my hon. Friend has suggested without trenching unreasonably on the exercise of those sports.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): When the Home Secretary introduced the White Paper this afternoon he said that we must try to get this right because it will hold fast for the next 15 years or so. In view of that comment, I examined that part of the document which summarises the present law on air weapons. There is great concern about air weapons because they cause millions of pounds' worth of damage to property. Windows have been broken, personal injury has been caused and people have lost eyes. Therefore, is it not appropriate now if we are to remould the legislation that we have a serious look at the position in respect of air weapons because people are grossly concerned about them?

Mr. Hurd: It is true that many firearms offences arise out of the misuse of air weapons. There is legislation on the statute book about the possession by the young of air weapons in public places. There is also legislation on the sale of those weapons. Most serious crime arising through the use of firearms does not involve air weapons. I would rather leave the proposals as they exist within the scope of the Firearms Act 1968.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I fully accept, following the two recent disastrous incidents, that it is essential that further tightening should take place. However, I am unhappy about paragraphs 33 and 47 in the White Paper. Paragraph 33 refers to foreigners who come here "to use" shotguns. Surely many people come to this country, including members of families who have shot all their lives. They may come to this country to borrow guns from family members and they use them. Will that be prohibited? On paragraph 47, I do not entirely agree with my right hon. Friend's view of compensation. People may own fairly antique shotguns. They are very valuable, but valuable only as antiques. People will receive no compensation for such weapons.

Mr. Hurd: I have answered the question about compensation. That point will certainly recur, but I have given the reasons why I believe that any compensation scheme would be difficult in principle and, however it was worked out, it would have more enemies than friends. In paragraphs 32 and 33 we are anxious to safeguard the position of visitors who come to this country to shoot or buy guns and then take them out of the country. I will consider the specific point about borrowing other people's guns.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Paragraph 21 of the White Paper refers to people satisfying the police that they have good reasons to own certain weapons. To borrow the Home Secretary's phrase, will he flesh that out? Some of us might believe that without guidelines the local constable may find it very difficult to establish what good reasons were.

Mr. Hurd: There must be guidelines. This is a statement of the existing law under section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968. We are not proposing to change that law, but we propose to include new categories of weapons in it.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Although I welcome the common sense reflected in the statement of the proposed legislation, I still have a slightly uneasy feeling about the mail order business, about which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has taken no action. I join the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in suggesting that it is not too much to ask the Home Office to keep an objective and beady eye on that aspect of the trade to see whether any problems arise in future.

Mr. Hurd: I will certainly be beady.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Home Secretary confirm that the intended legislation and the amnesty will apply in Scotland and in England and Wales? With regard to air guns, will he listen to representations about what are very dangerous firearms in the wrong hands, or has he set his face against that?

Mr. Hurd: The answer to the first question is "Yes." In reply to the second, I believe that the main problem with air weapons lies in the enforcement of the existing law.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there are nearly 20,000 murders a year in the United States and that that is 10 times more per head of population than in this country? That cannot be entirely unconnected with the very high level of irresponsible gun ownership in that country. Does he agree that the aim now must be to avoid going down that road? In that respect, the firm and reasonable proposals that he has brought forward today will be very welcome.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has made a sound point which applies to guns held in the community and guns held and used by the police.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I do not think that the White Paper goes nearly far enough to meet the present public concern about the possession and use of firearms. I want to join in the comments made by hon. Members on both sides of the House and say that it is a pity that the Home Secretary has not included air weapons because, in the hands of the young, they can cause great damage to wildlife. Will the Home Secretary consider banning the importation and sale of replica post-1914 weapons? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will next Tuesday join in supporting my Bill which seeks to ban the sale of war toys.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's question about airguns illustrates the point that I have just made that the problem is one of enforcing the existing law, including the possession and use of air weapons by the young, rather than of devising new laws. Legislation is already on the statute book which deals with replica weapons and it is satisfactory. It would not be sensible to get into the business of deciding which toys should be banned.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Unlike the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I agree with most of my hon. Friends that this package probably represents a fair balance between the obvious need to tighten up the legislation and the legitimate requirements of genuine shooters. Nevertheless, will my right hon. Friend pay particular attention to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir. H. Monro)? Will he give an absolute assurance that he will carry out detailed and careful consultations with those legitimate shooting interests before the legislation is brought in? Will he also consider the burden that any legislation will inevitably place on our police force?

Mr. Hurd: The police have been one of the main urgers-forward on this front. I am glad that I shall meet the British Shooting Sports Council on 7 December to discuss the White Paper. We have already consulted 17 separate shooting organisations, but it is convenient that the BSSC exists so that we can carry forward that consultation. I have arranged for a further period during which we can listen to detailed comment, and we shall do so constructively.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): If the Government's proposals are to make sense, surely gun control must be fully enforced in Northern Ireland, bearing in mind that many of the paramilitary hold legally authorised weapons, as well as illegal weapons? Why are the Government shy of mentioning Northern Ireland, which is the crucial issue of the day?

Mr. Hurd: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman should address his questions to him.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposals that he has announced today will have little adverse effect on legitimate shotgun owners anywhere? Will he further confirm whether, in discussions with his EEC counterparts, he has any proposals to tighten up the carrying of illegal weapons across Community frontiers?

Mr. Hurd: On my hon. Friend's second point, we shall resist the draft Commission directive which would make it virtually impossible to carry out the controls that I believe are necessary. On my hon. Friend's first point, I am sure that the House will accept that public confidence in the existing system of control has been roughly shaken this year. If shooters are to have a surer foundation on which to carry on their sports and professions, we need to progress beyond the present controls, otherwise the system will always be shaky and in question. I want a system in which people know exactly where they are and can carry on under it for 15 or 20 years.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Home Secretary will know of the serious incident in Scotland last Saturday when a gas grenade was fired into a section of the crowd at the Celtic-Hibs football match in Edinburgh. He will also know that press reports in Scotland since Saturday have suggested that the weapon used might have been of a type issued by the United States army and which is available by mail order. The Home Secretary has already said that he does not rule out further action, but will he assure the House that in future it will not be possible for potentially lethal weapons of that or any other kind to be purchased by mail order and used indiscriminately in this country?

Mr. Hurd: I was in Edinburgh at the time and, therefore, know of that incident. *[Interruption.]* I was not the target. The point that the hon. Gentleman has raised is not within my jurisdiction and I do not know whether it has been established that that type of weapon was used or what its status will be. However, I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman is properly informed about that.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): As I understand it, the most often used weapon in crimes of violence is the sawn-off shotgun. Does my right hon. Friend feel that the balanced announcement that he made today will contribute to lessening the use of that type of weapon, which may be acquired through private treaty sales of second-hand weapons? Does he feel that his measures will cover that aspect of gun sales?

Mr. Hurd: It is because of that major mischief, which my hon. Friend has described accurately, that we are moving that category of weapon up from section 1 to the prohibited category.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Would it not be fairer if the full rigour of the law applied to shotguns,

bearing in mind that there have been incidents in which landowners have used both barrels against passing air balloons? Under paragraph 40, firing ranges will be approved by the Ministry of Defence. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the MoD provides targets of ordinary pattern, rather than the figures of people, advancing with a gun, which are provided at the moment and which suggest a more combative approach than gun clubs need or want?

Mr. Hurd: I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's second point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. On his first point, I have explained why I do not believe that it would be sensible to do what Opposition Members want and to put shotguns under section 1. That would be expensive and would add considerably to the aggravation of the measures. I do not think that any corresponding gain in security would be worth it.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Gentleman here for the statement?

Mr. Devlin: No, not for the entire statement.

Mr. Speaker: Well, in fairness we should move on.

St. Mary's Hospital, Manchester

4.15 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of cots for premature babies at St. Mary's hospital, Manchester."

The hospital is to close five vital cots for premature babies because of the acute shortage of specialist nurses. I am informed that engineers will be called in to disconnect the oxygen suction and electricity supply to the life-support incubators before Christmas, leaving only 10 cots for the entire region.

Dr. Chiswick, the consultant in charge of the premature baby unit at St. Mary's hospital, has warned that that unprecedented action would mean that fewer babies could be saved. The conclusion is that the hospital will be forced to reject dying babies. That assessment has been confirmed by another top consultant, who claims that it is the death-knell for intensive care of babies and that more will certainly die.

Already, 50 per cent. of requests for the admission of babies are refused. Those babies are turned away and die unnecessarily because cots cannot be obtained anywhere. Current funding of the premature baby unit allows only for sufficient specialist nurses to maintain the reduced number of cots. The predicament facing the hospital is desperate.

I find it a most disturbing and unforgivable situation which allows premature babies to die when the means and the resources could be provided to allow them to live. Our society and the Government have sunk to a new low in medical care. I am ashamed that that should happen to babies in my constituency, or anywhere else. The House should be deeply concerned about these revelations. I beg to seek leave to move the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of cots for premature babies at St. Mary's hospital, Manchester."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. However, I hope that he may have other methods of bringing the matter before the House.

Post Office (Dispute)

4.18 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the breakdown in talks two hours ago between the Post Office and the Union of Communication Workers and the possibility of a national postal strike."

The matter is specific in that it relates entirely to the delivery of the Royal Mail and the working conditions under which the men and women who deliver it throughout the year are now forced to work. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has already intervened in the dispute in that he has instructed the Post Office that it must not concede more than a one-hour reduction in a 42-hour working week. No other working person works a 42-hour week—[HON. MEMBERS: "We do."] That one-hour reduction would be financed from productivity deals which would be concluded between the union and the Post Office, so it will be seen immediately that the Secretary of State, by intervening——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must say why there must be an emergency debate on this matter.

Mr. Ewing: I am showing that the matter is specific. I appreciate your stricture, Mr. Speaker. The intervention of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, giving instructions to the Post Office in relation to these discussions, is serious and specific.

The matter is important because 16 years ago, when we last had a national postal strike, there were serious consequences for industry, commerce and the public generally. At that time, private companies were allowed to deliver the mail. They charged a fee 10 times the cost of the postage stamp and when the strike was over they handed the Post Office thousands of items for which they had charged 10 times the cost of the postage, but which they had not delivered. They were then delivered by postmen returning to work on 11 March 1971, after that long nine-week strike.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has now had his time.

Mr. Ewing: The matter is urgent in that in some areas the strike has already commenced and the urgency is increased by the necessity for the House to have an opportunity to express its views before the strike becomes widespread.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the breakdown in talks between the Post Office and the Union of Communication Workers and the possibility of a national postage strike as a result."

Again, I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that this matter meets the criteria laid down under the Standing Orders. Therefore, I cannot submit his his application to the House.

Later——

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I revert to the question of the possibility of a postal strike?

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with that matter. For reasons which I have already stated, I did not feel able to grant an emergency debate.

Mr. Benn: This is a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Whether there will be a postal strike is not a point of order. This takes time from the Opposition's two debates, in which there is great pressure from hon. Members to speak. The right hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and he cannot claim a point of order when it would not be right for me to hear it.

Mr. Benn *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman may have one try, but that is all.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, Mr. Speaker, I know the rules of the House perfectly well. You need not give your reasons for refusing my hon. Friend's request for an emergency debate. I do not question that. What I am saying is this.

The Post Office has been in the public service since 1666 because it is public interest. It is our oldest public industry. A dispute of this kind is not a matter solely between the Post Office management and the unions, although postal workers actually work a 48-hour week. The point is that the Secretary of State has intervened on behalf of Parliament——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. As I said to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), it will be necessary, and possible, to find other ways of bringing the matter before the House.

Questions to Ministers

4.22 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today I have had a bit of a disappointment because I wanted to ask a supplementary question on question 13, standing in the name of the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant). As you will appreciate, he was unfortunately not present. I understand that this is not the first time that this——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. Time presses. If I receive notification from an hon. Member that he will not be present — that is a courtesy which the House will appreciate—I do not call his name. No point of order can arise on this.

Mr. Hamilton: You called the hon. Gentleman's name, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you might consider appointing the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to investigate this matter because——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That does not help.

Scottish Grand Committee

4.23 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Last night, for the second day running, Liberal Whips blocked the motion calling for a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on Monday to discuss the important matter of education. Is it right that a single cry of "Object" is sufficient to scupper an important meeting when Standing Order No. 94(3) states that the question on the motion should be put forthwith and that to support an objection there must be 20 hon. Members, which the Liberals certainly could not muster, rising in their places? Did the fault lie with the Government, who had not bothered to make the motion exempted business?

Many of us are astonished by the Liberal decision. I understood that Liberal Members supported the principle of meeting in Edinburgh, but obviously commitment for them is no more than a matter of convenience or, specifically in this case, inconvenience. I notice that the Government have left the motion on today's Order Paper, below the line, which presumably means that the matter cannot be considered by the House tonight. The rumours are that the Government have now no intention to hold this debate before the House rises for Christmas.

Standing Order No. 94(3) states that a motion must be laid by a Minister of the Crown. Presumably the Government could lay such a motion, exempt it and insist on the meeting. If they refuse to do that, is there any way in which those interested in the proper discussion of Scottish business can advance this matter? It would be sad if the Liberal party's achievement was to leave parliamentarians as one of the few groups in Scotland who have not had a formal opportunity to debate the Government's misconceived, unpopular plans for the management of our schools.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I need any help, but I shall listen.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you confirm that at least two Liberal Members in Scotland have constituencies close to Edinburgh? Can you inform the House whether they would find it difficult to find their way from their constituencies to Edinburgh for a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on Monday?

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. No one should be surprised at this because it arose last year. We said that five working days' notice of meetings of this importance of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh were simply not enough——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time presses in an important day. It will be legitimate for hon. Members who wish to comment on this matter to raise it in general in the debate later tonight. Nothing out of order occurred last night. It is perfectly in order for one objection to block such a motion if it is taken after 10 o'clock.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I genuinely seek your assistance in this. Scottish Members are worried about the way in which the Government inform us when these Committees will meet. Three weeks ago at Business Questions I asked that

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

we should have a Scottish Grand Committee to discuss the vital matter of education and the information came back subsequently with only five working days' notice. Although those of us who already have engagements in Scotland are prepared to cancel them to meet and discuss this vital issue, is there some way that you can ensure that information is forthcoming in advance to enable Scottish Members to attend these vital meetings?

Mr. Speaker: I have many responsibilities, but——

Mr. Kirkwood: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No. The matter cannot be debated now. It is up to the Government to table a motion. I cannot allow a debate on this now.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Well, the right hon. Gentleman is a former Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Millan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can clarify one matter for us? Will you confirm that what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, was accurate and that if the Government had tabled the necessary motion to exempt the business, the matter could have been considered under Standing Order No. 94, in which case a single voice of objection would have been insufficient to block the motion? Government good faith and competence is involved in this.

Mr. Speaker: If the business had been exempted that would have been in order and it would equally be in order to table the motion again.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Coypus (Prohibition on Keeping) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Telecommunications (Premium Services) (Regulation)

4.30 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a statutory regulatory body responsible for licensing telecommunication premium service providers: for regulating the content of material published; and for connected purposes.

In recent times, there has been a proliferation of premium services provided through the conduit of the public telephone system. They are provided by British Telecom and by a growing number of contract companies, many of which have been established specifically for the purpose of cashing in on an extremely lucrative venture. Like most ideas that generate large profits, with a minimum of effort, the introduction of premium services has attracted to the public telephone system a mixture of the unscrupulous, the greedy and the irresponsible. So fast has been the growth of those companies, and so comprehensive is the range of material that they promote, that the ability of the regulatory bodies to protect the public interest has fallen far short of what Parliament should expect.

It may surprise the House to learn that, for £100, anyone can obtain from the Department of Trade and Industry a licence to operate a premium line, and that British Telecom has no control over the use to which that line is put. BT's interest, therefore, is purely financial, for it shares the product of any call by private negotiation with the system provider.

The calls are now being charged at 38p a minute. The services range from the Talkabout line, operated by British Telecom only, through a variety of dating lines to competitions with prize money, the integrity of which is in considerable doubt. Talkabout has resulted in unsuspecting parents being landed with horrendous telephone bills, their children having been seduced by BT advertising into spending time on the domestic telephone. In some instances, bills of £500 to £1,000 have been run up.

The purpose of Talkabout is purely to link three or four callers for casual conversation. That has resulted in practices which could mildly be described as undesirable. Foul language is the norm, and there is some evidence in the Manchester area that Talkabout has even been used by the National Front as a recruiting medium. I myself have heard conversations on that line inciting racial hatred.

The whole range of BT premium services pose in their own way some threat to public well-being. The dating and related services could be, and probably are, a vehicle for sustaining a network of contacts for the purpose of prostitution, and the so-called adult entertainment lines could well be dangerous to the sexually immature. Indeed, so distasteful is one piece of adult line material that it is currently the subject of a police investigation. I have no doubt that that, and much of the rest of the output of the adult line service, is pornographic.

It is a pity that the existing regulatory bodies of British Telecom and the Department of Trade and Industry cannot, or will not, do anything about it. It would seem that needless public expense will need to be expended to secure a ruling from the courts.

The latest racket, if I may describe it thus, is the dial-a-doctor line. For about £10, a subscriber can call an anonymous qualified doctor — or so the advertising

claims—to seek medical advice. It seems to me wholly improper for anyone, even a doctor, to claim to be able to give competent medical advice to a complete stranger over the telephone. I know that the British Medical Association shares my view, and has made representations—as I have—to the Secretary of State for Social Services.

My final example of the worst excesses of premium services will, I believe, horrify the House. It exemplifies the greed of the service providers, and demonstrates the ease with which the public telephone service is being used to exploit our fellow citizens. Two or three weeks ago, my attention was drawn to a newspaper advertisement, not in the telephone entertainments column but in the "part-time jobs vacant" column. It was clearly aimed at the unemployed. The idea was that an unemployed person would telephone an ordinary line and receive instructions from the person at the other end. It was suggested that a good reading voice was essential and that, if the caller would make a tape and send it to an address in Stalybridge, in the north-west, he would probably earn £10 if the tape was accepted. The problem was that the recipient of the call passed the caller on to a premium line, thus bypassing the code of practice that the Department of Trade and Industry tells me is tight enough to save people from exploitation.

The line to which the caller is then connected is a 38p line. It is called the "Treasure Trail". Having been connected, at enormous expense, the caller is invited to send the tape to Nemo Ltd., of Stalybridge. I believe that that is merely a device to attract unsuspecting people on to the "Treasure Trail" line, which is good business for BT and for Nemo, but a rip-off for the caller. Such practices can only be described as shady, and are clearly devised to circumvent the already tenuous controls operated by BT.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to the unsatisfactory nature of the "Treasure Trail" competition itself. As far as I know, no audit is demanded by BT, the DTI or any of the watchdog bodies. There is no evidence that prize money is paid out, and there is no means by which the general public can know whether there are winners or losers. Because no stake money is passed over, I understand that there is no need to register the gains under any gaming and lotteries statute. That considerable expense is involved cannot be denied, and that serves to reinforce my view that the creation of an independent statutory body with adequate powers is urgently needed.

At the instigation of OFTEL, the Association of Telephone Information and Entertainment Providers produced a code of practice for premium services. I believe that to be woefully inadequate. I am certain that I have demonstrated today that it has proved useless in the face of the ingenuity of those who seek to make a fast buck without scruple.

The services to which I have drawn the attention of the House are a catalogue of exploitation of the unwary, and —I repeat—are being connived at by BT. The sick, the lonely, children and the sexually inadequate have all become targets for such exploitation.

Because of the shortage of time available to me, I have had to curtail my remarks. I assure the House that the abuses to which I refer have, perforce, beeen only superficially covered, and are more widespread than I have been able to suggest. So far, the regulatory authorities have been powerless to act, while BT and the DTI have been unwilling to do so. It is therefore necessary for the House to respond on behalf of the people whom we represent, and to create an effective statutory body to regulate these servies to which I have referred. My Bill will provide the vehicle for that response.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Terry Lewis, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. George Howarth, Mr. Tony Lloyd, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. Roger Stott, Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe and Mr. David Young.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (PREMIUM SERVICES) (REGULATION):

Mr. Terry Lewis accordingly presented a Bill to establish a statutory regulatory body responsible for licensing telecommunication premium service providers: for regulating the content of material published; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 64.]

Opposition Day

[6TH ALLOTTED DAY]

The Real Economy

4.39 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the high level of real interest rates, the proposal to make large increases in electricity charges and the other burdens already inflicted, or to be imposed in the future, on British producers and exporters by Government policy; and calls upon the Government to reverse its priorities so as to put the real economy first.

Mr. Speaker: I announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Gould: Over the last eight years, the Labour party has had two major criticisms of the way in which the economy has been run. The first was that, for reasons of dogma and because of avoidable mistakes of policy, the economy was being run at a level below its true potential; as a consequence, massive resources of labour and capital have been needlessly wasted. The second criticism was that provision for the future strength and capacity of the economy was wholly inadequate.

The economic events of 1986, particularly towards the end of the year, showed all too well that the Government recognised the force of our first criticism, because they relaxed monetary policy, reduced the exchange rate, allowed public spending to increase and, not surprisingly, provided exactly the stimulus to the economy that we predicted such policies would produce. As they had run the economy at a very low speed, it was not surprising that they have not found it difficult to achieve the acceleration that we have seen over the last year.

The problem that we now face is that the force of our second criticism is not abated. Because that criticism remains, the short-lived boom is unsustainable. Indeed, if anything, the boom gives even greater weight to our criticism about inadequate investment for the future. If, at the top of the so-called boom, we are still investing 8 per cent. less in manufacturing industry than we were in 1979, and if the investment that we put into research and development, training and infrastructure is still appalling by international standards, what chance have we of making adequate preparation when all the forecasts are for a slowdown in growth?

We have been saved from the immediate consequences of these failures by the accident of North sea oil. Oil revenues and their benefits to the balance of payments have been used to cushion us from the harsh consequences of the loss of market share in the rest of the economy. If the oil were to last for ever, this would still be a foolish thing to have done. It would have been a mistake and would have meant falling into a trap which the Norwegians and the Dutch have managed to avoid. Since oil production and oil revenues have already passed their peak, the waste of that opportunity is nothing less than criminal negligence.

Of course, the Government will point out that some of those revenues have been invested in overseas assets. But that offers us nothing more than a future Tory Britain as a remittance economy, having lost its power to produce for itself and having to eke out a living on the back of a wasting legacy. That failure to use the uncovenanted and unprecedented bonus of North sea oil to strengthen our industrial economy—the real economy in which people live, work, and make and sell real goods and services—is the main burden of our criticism of Government policy. That mistake has arisen because, unlike the Norwegians, the Dutch and others who have managed the benefits of major natural assets much better, we handed over to the financial establishment and to monetarist constraints the whole business of managing that great benefit to our economy.

Indeed, the point is wider. If we conduct the inquiry which has so often been pursued by people on both sides of the political divide and by outside commentators into why Britain has done badly over such a long period by comparison with our more successful rivals, while many other reasons have come and gone and many explanations have been offered and disproved, we find that the main reason is the continuing preoccupation of British policy making with the interests of those who hold assets, deal in money and make their living from shuffling around bits of paper and the consequent burden of the penalty suffered from that priority by those who live and work in the real economy.

That is the leitmotiv of British economic policy making. It goes back a long time. It is not a strictly party point that I make. The hangover of an imperial economy where we got used to living on assets and the return we could get from investments is perhaps over 100 years old. We fell out of the habit of making our living by manufacturing and selling things, and we still run the economy on those terms.

Japan, Germany and other more successful economies have a hard-headed appreciation of what is needed to give their industries a competitive edge to enable them to sell competitively and productively in the major international markets. On the other hand, we continue to run our economy in the interests of financial orthodoxy, heaping upon industry the interest and exchange rate burdens which make it so difficult for it to compete. No wonder, therefore, that it is constantly remarked by outside and foreign observers that in the British economy it is the financier and the accountant who rule over the engineer and the production manager.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall give way later.

Time and again priority has been given to the gold standard, to the parity of the pound or to some arcane monetary measure. At one point, sterling M3 was the keystone in the arch of monetary policy. Who now remembers what sterling M3 was? Who even knows at what rate it is rising?

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): At 22 per cent.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) says it is 22 per cent. I congratulate him; he is probably the only person on the Conservative side who has bothered to follow that figure.

Monetarism is essentially an extreme form of the bias in favour of the money economy at the expense of the real economy. It was a doctrine based on the view that all that Government had to do was set certain monetary targets which would have an immediate and beneficial effect on monetary aspects of the economy and would do no

damage to the real economy. We and the Government know from bitter experience—we are prepared to point it out, but they are unwilling to admit it—that the truth was the reverse of that prediction. The impact of monetary measures on the monetary aspects of the economy was diffuse, but they had an immediate and damaging effect on the real economy.

We went through the experience of 1980-81, with the tremendous loss of nearly one fifth of our industrial manufacturing capacity. There were huge falls in investment, employment and manufacturing output. There was a huge deterioration, from which we still suffer, in manufacturing trade. All of that we know, but in this debate we do not want to go over those admitted facts.

There is another important question. When such damage was being done to industry and to the real economy in the name of now discredited and esoteric economic theories, where was the Department of Trade and Industry? Where was the great Department whose responsibility it is to maintain and promote the health of industry and of the real economy? Why was no voice raised from the Tory Benches against the madness that was being implemented in the Government's name in the cause of monetarism? The fact that there were so many Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and that they came and went so quickly is in itself an indiction of how little attention was paid to their views. Whey did they stay silent, one after another, as that tremendous damage was done?

I remind the House that one fifth of manufacturing industry was wiped out as a consequence of that ridiculous monetarist ratchet, which set such tight monetary conditions, high interest rates and overvaluation of the exchange rate that huge portions of industry simply could not survive. Where was the voice from the Department which is responsible for protecting the interests of industry and of those who live and work in the real economy?

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The hon. Member talks about the lack of a voice from the Department of Trade and Industry over the past few years. How does he square that with the fact that in the past two years Skelmersdale in my constituency, a regional development assisted area, has let 2 million sq ft of empty factories, pump-primed by the Department of Trade and Industry? How does that fit in with his argument?

Mr. Gould: My response is that it is almost entirely irrelevant to the point I am making, but since the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) raises it, I ought to try to reconcile what he has said, which is no doubt true —anecdotal evidence is always useful—with the report presented this week which states that further cuts will be made in the regional aid programme. The Government have continually run that down, to the great disadvantage of the regional economy.

One Secretary of State after another has succumbed to the monetarist nonsense that only markets matter. That all sounds rather outdated in the aftermath of the stock market crash, but that view was taken and still prevails in the Department, and I am certain that we shall hear it again this evening. The only industrial policy the Department has is that there is no need to have an industrial policy. That might have been tolerable, although it would not have worked or been helpful, if the market place to which the Department of Trade and Industry consigned industry had been at all congenial, but it had already sold the pass on the way in which the market place was to be influenced and defined. It was being influenced and defined not in the interests of manufacturing industry but in the interests of the financial establishment, which had got its hands on the levers of power, and in the interests of the money markets, which had persuaded the Chancellor of the Exchequer that they were all that mattered.

Nowhere is this point more important than on interest rates, which remain so much higher than most of our competitors — almost three times higher than in Germany. The consequence of excessively high interest rates, as no hon. Member can be unaware, because on this issue industry has been very forthright, is that burdens are imposed on industry which make it more difficult and expensive to borrow and invest, and operate as a major deterrent to the investment which is required. It is a tax on investment. Almost every commentator on the economy would recognise that we desperately need investment, and anything which deters that and acts as an disincentive is very much to be deplored. Nevertheless, we have very high interest rates, with all the consequent effects on exchange rates.

Interest rates are important in practical terms. The CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation and other industry representatives are very clear about what high interest rates mean to them. Interest rates are also significant for what they tell us about Government policy and priorities, because they fulfil many economic functions. First, they strike a balance between the interests of owners and users of money and between the interests of financial establishment and the real economy. Our high interest rates, which are much higher than elsewhere, show the Government's willingness again to give priority to those who own and sell money and the Government's disregard for the interests of those who need to use that money to invest in the real economy.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member refers to financial markets and the real economy. I come from the north-west, one of the most beautiful parts of the country. We are working like mad to develop our tourist attractions, which are among our biggest money earners, and are creating more jobs than any other sector. The hon. Member has left that out entirely, but that is just as much the real economy as anything else.

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) fully understood her local and regional economy she would know that high interest and exchange rates are extremely damaging to the tourism to which she is rightly attached. Therefore I make the point, for those who clearly do not understand it, that the real economy, while embracing manufacturing industry as an extremely important component, is not the same thing as manufacturing industry. It does not exclude the very valuable services provided and sold in international markets and markets at home. There is a distinction between the real economy, which makes and sells real goods and services, and the money economy, which is interested simply in maintaining the value of assets and earning a reward for the sale and use of money. That is the important distinction, and I am sorry that the hon. Lady has betrayed her ignorance in that way.

Interest rates, quite apart from striking a balance between the owners and users of money, also serve the

[Mr. Gould]

function in economic theory of settng the price we are prepared to pay to forgo current consumption to make future investment. If interest rates are set very high, that shows that we are reluctant to forgo current consumption and unwilling to make long-term future investment. The high interest rates that the Government have set—and on which, as far as I am aware, the Department of Trade and Industry has been notably silent for eight years—promote and encourage the very short-termism of which the Chancellor has occasionally been so critical.

High interest rates compel and signal, and are the instrument and symbol of, a preoccupation with the short term. The priority given to money making, rather than making goods and providing services, has given industry and economic policy its short-term perspective. After all, the specialisation of a company which produces a given product or sells a given service will lead to investment, machinery, innovation, new products and the development of a skilled work force—all necessary to improve the market for that real product or service. But if a company's identity is based largely on the making of money, it has very little commitment to long-term investment. Its expertise lies in identifying the specialist activities of others, from which it can make a quick return before passing on. That is why we have those great monuments to short-termism and unwillingness to invest—the cash mountains of GEC and conglomerates such as the Hanson Trust—and that is why in the modern economy the banks, asset-strippers and takeover merchants are making all the running. That is why their voice prevails in the CBI and we hear so little about the real interests of industry.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman has just been very disparaging about two great manufacturing companies. It is not good enough for someone who has probably had no experience of what he calls the real economy, and has never had any experience of running a business, to be so rude and disparaging about two companies which have probably done more for manufacturing than all of the Labour party's efforts in the past 80 years.

Mr. Gould: The intervention of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) does him more credit for his loyalty than his common sense, because the statement I made about GEC and the Hanson Trust has been made by people of all political persuasions and by virtually every economic commentator.

If high interest rates are the instrument or badge of short-termism, as I believe is indisputable, and it is clear that they are so damaging to our economic future, why do we have them? That is a very simple question, which I have asked on many occasions, and I have not yet had a proper answer.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: I am glad to give way, because when I raised this question a couple of weeks ago, the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) assured me that we need not have them and that they would be reduced. I am sorry to say that so far his prediction has not been borne out.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Although I have had little experience of the real economy, I have had 30 years' experience of short-termism. I earned my living as something of a foreign exchange dealer in that time. Although I agree with the main thrust of the academic case that the hon. Gentleman puts forward, which is, as he may remember, what I argued from 1979 to 1982, the trouble at this moment is that, with the American dollar almost in a state of free-fall, we could be faced at any time with an increase in American interest rates to try to cope with that situation. I have no doubt that the delay of a fortnight on my advice to cut interest rates further has been due to that fact. The worst thing that we could do is to cut interest rates tonight and have to put them up again next week in pursuit of rising American rates.

Mr. Gould: I fear that the hon. Gentleman's intervention takes me into realms of economic policy, into which I should dearly like to follow him, but they are beyond the scope of the debate. In a moment, I shall say a word about the need to cut interest rates and the impact on the exchange rate.

Let me return to the subject. Again, the Department of Trade and Industry has a certain responsibility in such matters. It is responsible for the well-being and general health and strength of British industry, yet it remains remarkably silent on such an extremely important matter.

Why do we have such high interest rates? Surely it is no longer the case—it may once have been—that we have high interest rates to control the money supply. No one believes that any longer, do they? No one worries about sterling M3 rising, as has rightly been said by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, at 22 per cent. a year. That is not a matter of any great concern to anybody. Indeed, all the evidence is that, in any case, high interest rates were notably ineffective in controlling the money supply. In some senses, they even stimulated more lending. When companies had liquidity problems, they sometimes made them borrow more. They have certainly done nothing to curtail consumer credit or asset inflation. There is no longer any monetary ground, one assumes, for having high interest rates.

Surely the only other reason—the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West raised a good point—is that high interest rates prop up the pound. The so-called strong currency requires interest rates that are nearly three times as high as those of competitor economies and 3 million unemployed to hold them where they are. It is hardly a strong currency if it needs that sort of support. At least interest rates are effective to prop up the pound. Nobody doubts that high interest rates keep the pound where it is at present.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West) *rose—*

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way. I have frequently given way, and I intend to proceed.

Is it really the Government's policy to burden British industry and the economy with high interest rates, as has been suggested, to raise the parity of the pound against the dollar to $1·80? Where does it end? Does it end at $1·85, $2, or are we to return to the days in 1980 and 1981 when one fifth of British industry was wiped out? Have we learnt nothing?

Does the Minister not hear the cries of pain and alarm from the textile, engineering and chemicals industries? Does he not understand that, as the pound rises on the

back of high interest rates against the dollar, the future of British manufacturing and the future of billions of pounds' worth of exports to the American market are at stake? Does he not understand that, as the American market becomes closed to us, if we allow the measure to proceed, others who also find it more difficult to sell to the American market—for example, the Japanese, Germans, French, Italians, Taiwanese and Koreans—will become yet more ferocious predators elsewhere in the international market, and will make it even more difficult for British industry to compete?

Is it really the Government's policy to raise interest rates or to keep them at their present excessively high levels, as the Chancellor said, to keep the rate against the deutschmark stable? Is that really what is required when we now import twice as many manufactured goods from Germany as we can sell to it, and when we are now on course for an annual deficit of £7·2 billion of manufactured trade as against the Germans this year, worth nearly 750,000 jobs in British industry?

The consequences for the exchange rate of the high interest rates with which the Government have saddled British industry are nothing more than a tax on exports and a subsidy to imports. What does the Department of Trade and Industry have to say on the matter? Where have been the arguments and statements in support of British industry? Where have been the Cabinet rows? Where is the voice raised to save British industry from such matters?

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's analysis in response to the intervention that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) a moment ago. Do I correctly understand that the Opposition's policy is that we should reduce interest rates to go in for a competitive devaluation with the dollar at the moment? Does the hon. Gentleman understand the implications of that policy for raw materials costs in this country, among other matters? Does he not think that that policy smacks of short-termism—rather reckless short-termism—in the present financial circumstances?

Mr. Gould: Nothing in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's intervention flows from what I have said. I shall be interested to hear his view on whether he thinks that it is a good idea to maintain interest rates at their present level, which are nearly three times higher than German rates, when the consequence is that the pound rises inexorably against the dollar and destroys the competitiveness of British industry. That is the question. If he wishes to comment on it, I shall be delighted to hear from him. I am more interested to hear what intervention he is making on any level—wherever—to ensure that the damage, which is predictable and well known in view of our experience, is averted.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend will make a valuable case about lowering interest rates to get unemployment down, to rescue the manufacturing base and do all the things that he wants to see done. He should not necessarily assume that lowering interest rates would result in a higher exchange rate for the pound. If sterling were much higher against other currencies such as the dollar, the deutschmark and everything else, we should not assume that that is a bad thing. The fact that the West German and Japanese economies have manageed to do what they have done with surpluses of $120 billion between them at present is not due to their rates falling in relation to the dollar and the pound.

Mr. Gould: I agree with my hon. Friend. The position on interest rates and exchange rates is by no means a sufficient precondition for economic success. However, it is a necessary precondition. My hon. Friend mentioned the German performance. Of course, the real exchange rate as against the deutschmark has risen in this country since September last year, well into double figures. That is the situation. Again, British industry and all those who work in it and whose jobs depend on it should be well aware that a loss of competitiveness threatens jobs and output.

Sir Peter Tapsell *rose*——

Mr. David Howell *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way. I shall proceed. I am now proceeding to a different point.

If the Minister and the Department of Trade and Industry are silent on interest and exchange rates, and have been silent for eight years, they have also been silent on electricity charges. Recently, the Government announced the introduction of quite unnecessary increases in electricity charges, amounting to 15 per cent. over the next two years. It is difficult to know which is the more absurd, the real reason for the increase or the one that the Government have given.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way. I have only just begun on this point.

The Government have told us that they need to raise prices to finance the expansion of the capacity of electricity generation. For years past, the Government have used the electricity industry and indeed, other energy industries as milch cows — as sources of hidden forms of taxation revenue. If there were to be a case for investing large sums in future capacity, what happened to the money that was filched from consumers over all the years when the Government imposed quite unnecessary charges on domestic consumers?

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way on this point.

The true reason for the Government raising electricity charges is, yet again, our old friend privatisation. They are basically fattening up an industry so that it can be made to look attractive to private buyers. What is now being privatised is the right to overcharge domestic and industrial electricity consumers, and to do so in perpetuity, just as industry and consumers have had to pay excessively for the privatisation of other industries.

Mr. Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I will not.

What has the Department of Trade and Industry said about its failure to stimulate and encourage investment in research and development, infrastructure and training? These are not so much sins of commission as sins of omission. The burden imposed on industry by crumbling infrastructure can certainly not be ignored. Does the Minister pay no attention to the pleas that have been made for many years now by the CBI and the Engineering

[Mr. Gould]

Employers Federation? Or does he just block his ears and smile sweetly at the Chancellor? In a memo to the National Economic Development Corporation on 1 October this year, the CBI wrote:

"If business is to have the infrastructure it needs to reduce its costs, cuts in public capital spending must be reversed."

Does the Minister endorse that position? Does he take the CBI's view of the need for that form of public spending? Has he told the Chancellor so? If he has, he has been notably ineffective in getting the message home.

What about research and development? As we all know, Britain's record is appallingly poor by international standards. The Minister may well have seen the recent article in the National Institute *Economic Review* which shows that in 1983 our industry-financed spending on research and development was less than half that of Germany, one fifth that of Japan and one eighth that of the United States. Of the 10 countries analysed, only Italy spent less per capita than the United Kingdom. The role of Government in the decline of research and development spending is crucial. The recent answer given by the Minister himself showed that the United Kingdom is the only one of the major seven countries to have experienced a decline in public funding of research and development.

The real burden on our economy is a Government who do not know or care. We have a Chancellor who can say, of a turnround in our manufactured trade since 1979 amounting to £13 billion-worth of goods, that it is neither here nor there. We have a Chancellor who, in the interests of developing a low-tech-no-tech economy, abolished capital allowances in 1983-84. We have a Department of Trade and Industry which has no sense of its own responsibilities but sits back complacently while British industry is again placed on the rack. We have a Department whose only idea of an industrial strategy is to encourage employers to return to Victorian practices which, as the Equal Opportunities Commission pointed out, will very unfairly disadvantage women workers and all those others in the labour market whose position needs protection. We have a Department that can publish a White Paper in which it talks about building business and boasts about a measure permitting "casinos to redeem cheques". That just about sums up the Government's industrial strategy, their futility and triviality and their lack of ability to get to grips with the real needs of British industry. If we are to face the future with confidence, we desperately need to remove that uncaring, unknowing irresponsible Government from the back of the real economy.

We need a proper industrial strategy that understands the needs of industry and provides it with an environment in which it can prosper and the help and encouragement to make the investment that we desperately need. We need a strategy that recognises the proper and crucial role of the Government as the provider of services and investment help, as a partner in the national enterprise and as an agency that makes up for the now admitted deficiencies of the market.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I will not.

We need a Government who are prepared to intervene in the interests of the real economy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no".] Oh, yes. I know that the very word "intervention" provokes all sorts of Pavlovian responses from Conservative Members.

We have had an interventionist Government all right. They have intervened consistently to hold up interest rates and to impose charges. They have intervened in foreign exchange and equity markets. They are always prepared to intervene in the interests of the money economy, but they are never prepared to take any action to help those who live and work in the real economy.

If we are to succeed, we need to follow the successful example of countries abroad, which understand the importance——

Mr. David Howell: Which ones?

Mr. Gould: The right hon. Gentleman asks me which ones. The clear answer is Japan, Germany, Italy, France, the United States—virtually any advanced economy that has done better than us in recent years. Those countries have done better because they realise the great value and importance of co-operation between Government and industry. Opposition Members are not alone in making that point. Increasingly, the leaders of British industry understand the importance of co-operation — that the Government can be their partner and an encouragement to them. However, they are increasingly aware that they are unlikely to get such help and encouragement from the present Government.

The next Labour Government will create such a partnership, not just in the interests of industry but in the interests of all those who make their living by working in factories, providing real goods and services and selling them into the international markets. That is where the wealth of the country lies. We should recognise the importance of the real economy and the disadvantages that we suffer if we give priority to the money economy. Those are the matters on which a proper industrial strategy rests, and that strategy will form the basis of the programme of the next Labour Government.

5.15 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I was surprised to hear of the subject chosen for this debate, because it was first described to me as a debate on the burdens imposed by Government on industry. Until recently, that was a regular theme of this Government's policies in a number of areas, including my own Department of Trade and Industry.

Given the Labour party's past and the policies that it has advocated, it is strange to hear Labour Members talking about lifting Government burdens on industry. It is rather like hearing an orthodox rabbi make a speech on the safe consumption of pork. This is certainly a new subject for the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The hon. Gentleman is, of course, a revisionist in the Labour party. He is trying to turn it in new directions and open up new horizons, which was no doubt the purpose of his speech. He has already begun to talk about share ownership and to refer in friendly terms to private enterprise. He is gently booed at party conferences for raising such subjects. Today he has given us a thoughtful, academic and at times, I thought, eccentric contribution.

He has tried to explain and rewrite a little the history of the past few years to prepare the ground for an analysis of what a future Labour Government would do. It is not policy yet. Various groups in the Labour party are embarking on a two-year voyage of discovery so that they can decide what they can say to give themselves an industrial policy for the next election.

The hon. Gentleman will have to start again. His rewriting of history was rather extraordinary. No doubt, from the Labour party's point of view it is important to explain the history of the past eight years and to explain why Labour lost its third successive election, especially as it lost because the electorate perceived that the economy was booming at the end of its years of criticism. The theory that the hon. Gentleman is putting out to his followers is that the economy picked up before the election because from 1986 onwards we began to follow Labour party policies and relax monetary controls and so on. The hon. Gentleman knows that the economy was in a very healthy state at the end of that process, when we were in fact being criticised for the very consistency of the policies for which the Government have been noted throughout our eight years of office.

The hon. Gentleman said that the boom was short-lived and went on to describe present problems. He still talks about relaxing monetary policy and lowering interest rates. He cited Germany and Japan as successful economies that we should seek to emulate. I would not have said that either presented a model of relaxed monetary policy to follow in the world economy. One has only to look at the pressure that they are under from the rest of the world at the moment. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who is independent, and always aggressive in all directions, bowled his hon. Friend's middle stump when he said that it was eccentric to claim that the industrial success of Germany and Japan depends above all else on Government decisions to reduce interest rates. Plainly, that is not the root cause of their success.

The worst thing—it demonstrates that the revisionism is not yet complete—is that the analysis given by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) of the present state of British industry and the outlook for industry could have been written in 1979, 1980 or 1981. It is the kind of description that the Labour party gave of manufacturing industry and the economy when we went through a period of extremely dramatic change and economic difficulties. That analysis does not relate to the present situation.

The hon. Member for Dagenham has the new duty to shadow the Department of Trade and Industry. I wonder whether he ever has a look at the CBI's quarterly industrial trends survey. One of my hon. Friends has already asked whether he meets many managers in the manufacturing industry and the service economy. If he did so, he would know that, at present, confidence in the British industry is at its highest level. We are in a period when manufacturing output has been rising strongly and manufacturing employment has even started to go up again. Manufacturing investment is also doing well and is not dropping, as the hon. Member for Dagenham has claimed.

If the hon. Member for Dagenham believes that the present level of manufacturing investment is somehow affected by interest rates, he should turn to the back page of the last CBI quarterly survey. Leaders of industry were asked what factors were likely to limit capital expenditure over the next 12 months. Of those who responded, 1 per cent. talked about the inability to raise external finance and 8 per cent. mentioned the cost of finance. Those were the only limitations mentioned against a background of rising investment in industry.

Mr. Gould: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has raised the question of manufacturing investment—I assume that is what he is talking about and we must be precise about that—will he tell us where that investment stands now, in relation to 1979? Is that investment rate higher or lower? Throughout the Government's period of office, has investment ever been higher than the 1979 rate?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that this type of exchange has been taking place across the Dispatch Box for the past eight years. The economy went into a serious recession for two years, but, since then, it has been steadily growing. Manufacturing investment is rising extremely strongly, yet the hon. Gentleman has implied that it is falling. The hon. Gentleman can no longer ask about manufacturing output, because we are about to rise above the peak reached in 1979. The 1979-1987 comparison was worn out in the previous Parliament and to make such a comparison is increasingly dangerous. Certainly the present situation does not support the hon. Gentleman's assertion that manufacturing investment is in decline—the truth is precisely the opposite.

The hon. Member for Dagenham referred to research and development. We all agree that that is something to which British industry should pay more attention. However, the level of expenditure on R and D in British industry is rising strongly—the hon. Gentleman should know that, because he has seen the latest figures. He also knows that the Government spend £4·5 billion on R and D of one kind or another to stimulate such work in this country. The hon. Gentleman may leap to his feet—those who lobby for R and D often do, and it is fair enough — and point out that that Government investment is lower than the percentage invested by some other countries. However, our contribution represents a higher percentage when compared to the contributions made by Germany and Japan—the hon. Gentleman's favoured nations and those which he regards as the models for our economic performance.

I find it a little rich for the Labour party to attack us on training, especially given my previous responsibilities. The Opposition say that we have not encouraged industry and the economy to pay enough attention to training. Certainly we need a better trained work force, but it is also true that industry is paying much greater attention to that training. Expenditure within industry for all training is rising rapidly. In the teeth of opposition from the Labour party, the Government have stimulated that growth enormously as a result of the policies of the DTI and the Manpower Services Commission. Such opposition is apparent whenever we try to stimulate the training of the intractable unemployed, the long-term unemployed and the young.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Can the Minister tell me why the only organisation in south Yorkshire that is skill-training people from school is the local authority? There are also a few people being trained at British Steel. The fact is that skill training has been taken away from areas such as south Yorkshire as a result of Government policy.

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is referring to skillcentres, I am afraid that I do not know the present state of affairs regarding those centres. However, employers in south Yorkshire are expending money on training as they are elsewhere. The MSC is also expending money on training in south Yorkshire. The skillcentre may have closed down, but that represents only one aspect of the training policy.

The hon. Member for Dagenham also spoke of cuts in capital spending. I did not rise to ask him to specify what forms of capital spending he meant. Certainly, major capital programme spending has increased. We took over a roads programme that had been cut by the previous Labour Government. That programme was demoralised because of the Labour Government's constant concessions to the anti-road lobby of the National Union of Railwaymen. Expenditure on roads is now up by 30 per cent. in real terms compared to the level achieved by the previous Labour Government—and that expenditure is rising strongly. Hospitals expenditure has also risen after it had been cut by the previous Labour Government. The Opposition want us to build council house estates, and that represents the only source that they can find to back their continued allegation of cuts in capital spending.

The real economy, with which this motion is concerned, is now doing extremely well—it is doing better than it has for a generation. The outlook for industry is better than most managers can remember in their lifetime. We are well placed to withstand the buffeting of the international climate should that climate become more difficult. If things remain on course, we are well placed to continue to prosper, as we have one of the fastest rates of growth in the developed world. It is important to sustain that growth. When I consider the Opposition motion I welcome their apparent—I believe it has turned out to be passing—interest in the burdens and penalties that can be imposed, sometimes mistakenly, by Governments on those trying to manage British industry and expand our real economy.

If the hon. Member for Dagenham is truly engaged on a course of revisionism and is trying to plot a new course for his party he should devote his time to considering what burdens Government policies can impose on the real economy. He should contrast present achievements with the record achieved when his party was in power. Many of our activities have been spent removing from industry the daily burdens and penalties which were strongly enforced by the Labour Government.

Throughout his speech the hon. Member for Dagenham did not mention the word "inflation"—it still appears to be something which he regards as an irrelevance to managing the real economy. We have discussed peaks and we should remember that inflation reached a peak of 27 per cent. per annum in August 1975, under a Labour Government. That is a real burden on anyone trying to make a living in the sensible market place. The rate is now 4·5 per cent.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I must persevere a little further before I give way.

The hon. Member for Dagenham did not mention taxation—because, again, the Labour party apparently does not regard that as any kind of burden on industry or management. However, the hon. Gentleman should go out and talk to managers and consider the past effects of taxation on the real economy of the country. He should consider the effects that were suffered when the basic rate of income tax was 33 per cent.—it stood at that rate when we were elected. The present level of taxation is 27 per cent. and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said that we will reduce taxation to 25 per cent. as soon as we can prudently do so.

Under the Labour Government, the highest rate of personal taxation was 83 per cent. The taxation rate on investment income for individuals was at the ludicrous level of 98 per cent.—now it is 60 per cent. Under Labour — the party now interested in reducing the burden on business—corporation tax was 52 per cent.; we have reduced that level to 35 per cent.. The small companies rate of corporation tax has gone down from 42 per cent. to 27 per cent.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: It is no good interrupting me.

The Opposition have rushed here to rescue industry from higher electricity prices—I shall return to that matter shortly. I believe that the burdens I have outlined would be reimposed by the Labour party—we would be back to the situation before we won our first election.

The national insurance surcharge had a certain effect on industry's pay bills and its capacity to employ people—it was a tax on employment that we have abolished. We have restructured the rates of national insurance contributions for the lower-paid in comparison to the rates that existed when we took office. That restructuring has removed another disincentive to employment that the Labour party left behind. We have abolished three other taxes—investment income surcharge, development land tax and capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts. Their abolition has played a part in stimulating the investment about which the hon. Member for Dagenham claims to be concerned. We have reorganised the system of capital allowances, so that profit rather than tax efficiency is the driving force for investment.

The hon. Member for Dagenham did not mention pay. When Labour was in office, it sought to impose on industry its view on pay and pay structures. It sought to impose the pay structure that it thought each and every business should have and towards which each and every management should strive. I will not go over the long, appalling history of officials in the Department of Employment trying to impose ridiculous pay norms on businesses of every size across the country each year, so that no management could properly reward productivity and success and manage its business as it wanted. They wound up with "black lists" of companies which were struck from Government procurement if they dissatisfied the then Chief Secretary. That was a burden on industry that they were clinging to in 1979.

Talking about burdens, if, under the last Labour Government, a business which was unable to set its own wage rates, which was actually operating under this crushing burden of taxation and facing horrendous levels of inflation, wanted to adjust its prices in the market in which it was struggling for survival, the Government said that it needed the permission of the Price Commission, to which its proposals had to be submitted before it could respond to that market. If someone wanted to expand his business under the last Labour Government, actually

believed that he was successful and wanted to expand, he could not go and buy a site and develop a factory: he had to apply to the Minister for an industrial development certificate.

Hon. Members should go round the wastelands of the black country and Birmingham nowadays, where industrial development certificates were refused, year in, year out, by Labour Ministers who thought that they knew best where industrial development ought to be located, and see the levels of unemployment there.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: It is extraordinary effrontery on the part of the Opposition Front Bench to talk of burdens on business. Quite apart from the Government, their allies in the trade union movement were totally free from legal restraint. So if any industry struggled to improve its productivity, it was hindered by its inability to deal with trade unions which were buttressed by sweeping legal rights, unaccountable to their membership and used to getting their own way by confrontation before negotiation, usually with the assistance of a Minister if it looked as though they were not succeeding in obstructing the management.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): While the Minister is expressing concern about the viability of firms and taking some credit for the fact that the Government have removed a number of obstacles—he referred, for example, to reductions in corporation tax—will he be referring in the course of his speech to the difference between the number of bankruptcies in 1979 and the figure every year since his Government have been in power?

Mr. Clarke: The rate at which new businesses are being created is increasing. About one third of new businesses fail. If the number of new businesses rises, so will the number of failures. Nevertheless, the net growth of new businesses is rising strongly. We are seeing more start-ups nowadays than we have for many years.

I will turn from the history of the last Labour Government because I think that I have probably made my point. Beginning as the hon. Member for Dagenham did, by going over his account of history, it is an extraordinary change of circumstances for the Opposition to come along and criticise us for placing burdens on business, seizing, as far as I can see, on electricity prices. When they were in office, they imposed burdens on firms which prevented them from increasing productivity, raising their prices and setting their own wages; they crushed them with taxation and faced them with inflation when they tried to earn a living.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister again. I am not at all surprised that he should seek to take refuge in events of a decade ago. None of that covers up what was, no doubt, an unintentional slip of the tongue when he referred to the peak of 1979. The fact that he concedes that point throws some doubt on his analysis of the experience of the 1970s. Surely the real point, the one that we are still waiting for him to answer, is what view he takes, as the Minister for the real economy, on questions such as interest rates, or the CBI's insistence that public capital spending cuts have to be reversed. Those are the burdens of which industry is currently complaining.

Mr. Clarke: I will turn from history, of course, as the hon. Gentleman invites me to do; but he made frequent references to 1979. He takes a slightly mandarin view of history, because we cannot talk about the period before 1979 and we cannot talk about the present. The year 1979 was the pivot of the hon. Gentleman's analysis.

The background of the hon. Gentleman's speech is not just that history, but also the fact that, at the last general election, the Labour party advocated to British business, which had to decide whether it should turn to Labour or not, the repeal of the trade union legislation, the setting by Government of minimum wages for employees, Government-directed capital investment on which the then shadow Chancellor waxed lyrical, higher taxation and the ending of nuclear power which would have put up industrial costs and reduced jobs in a number of industries.

It is quite astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should be talking as though, six months ago, he had fought on a platform that was intended to lift burdens from business and bring about an expansionist economy. The record that he must now improve on is very much better than the one before. Productivity is the key measure of how the economy has been able to perform under our stewardship compared with his.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

I just want again to point out that, in 1973-79, in a period of very close interventionism, which the hon. Gentleman conceded he still espoused, average productivity rose by 1 per cent. per annum for the whole economy and by 0·75 per cent. for manufacturing industry. But in 1979-87, taking the period that the hon. Gentleman likes, average productivity has risen 2 per cent. per annum for the whole economy and 4 per cent. per annum for manufacturing industry. It is that which has made us one of the most competitive economies in the 1980s and made us one of the least competitive economies in 1979.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept my sincere thanks for reminding the House how dreadful and how interventionist a Socialist Government can be? Will he explain to the House why the Government now propose to amend the Local Government Bill to allow local authorities to impose social clauses in their contracts and to interfere in exactly the same way that the Labour Government used to interfere? Does it not show that the present Government are arrogantly supposing that they will rule for ever and that they have completely forgotten the way in which those social clauses, with the encouragement of a Government of a different complexion, could be used again to the vast disadvantage of British industry?

Mr. Clarke: To divert ourselves just for a second to the clauses that my hon. and learned friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) is steering through the House, and with which my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) disagrees in part, the clause about whose details he argues seeks to stop local authorities imposing political conditions on those companies which wish to tender for contracts with them. It is, in my hon. Friend's opinion, perhaps regrettable that there is a restatement there of the race relations legislation, which we are not, in any event,

[Mr. Clarke]

proposing to repeal. But, as far as I can recall, we are not actually suggesting that the imposition of political patterns on contractors should be allowed. We are working in the general direction, at least he will concede, that he would wish.

Let me return to other burdens. There was one subject that I thought the hon. Gentleman the Member for Dagenham was going to raise and which I will just touch on briefly. If the hon. Gentleman really wishes to take the Labour party on this voyage of discovery into lifting the burdens and penalties on industry, as he says, he might reconsider the question of deregulation. To paraphrase what he said at one point, he knows perfectly well that deregulation is one of those things which still sets off a Pavlovian response in everybody on the Left wing of the Labour party, and, as far as I can see, across most of the Labour Front Bench as well. In the next debate, we shall probably hear the honourable Leader of the Opposition in a totally non-deregulating mood.

The logic of the Opposition motion and the logic of our activities is that Government burdens on industry need to be lifted. Proper standards of health and safety, proper commercial practice, basic minimum standards of employment law and other necessary things, must be imposed, but this must be done without wasting management's time or inhibiting its ability to manage, to the benefit of consumers and employees. We must, in particular, encourage small businesses and start-up entrepreneurs to devote the necessary time to their businesses rather than taking up this valuable time by giving them questionnaires to fill in. We have cut down the number of questionnaires that used to go out by about one third, and we have eased the detailed regulations of employment protection law on small businesses without detriment to anyone.

One thing that the hon. Gentleman might consider is having a look at the new procedures that we have set up right across Whitehall to make sure that, whenever a new regulatory requirement is to be imposed on business, we now first examine its likely impact on business costs and management time and assess that against whatever benefit is likely to accrue.

The objectives of deregulation policy are that business costs should be taken into account in all our decisions, that awareness of the needs of enterprise should be embedded into the public service culture and that outmoded regulation requirements should be removed. Regulatory requirements of all kinds are usually urged upon us by the Opposition. If they look at our economic policy, and, in particular, the performance of the small business sector, they will see that we need to cut red tape, to apply regulations in a sensitive manner and to reduce bureaucracy.

I shall not enter into the deregulation of markets, upon which we have so successfully embarked. We remember the battles conducted by the Opposition against the deregulation of express coach services and buses, the ending of the opticians' monopoly on spectacle frames and other things, all of which, in the end, brought great benefits to consumers, and, in most cases, greatly increased employment and activity in industry and in the professions.

Another thing that we should look at which is topical, if the Opposition are looking at burdens on business, is rates. The Government are proposing to reform the rating system for industry in order to lift a real burden from industry in various parts of the country. Business rates have now been regularly increasing over many years by much more than the rate of inflation. By 1985, if we leave out North sea operations and look at the land-based economy, British firms were paying as much in business rates as in corporation tax. But there are differences between rates and corporation tax even. Rates have to be paid in good times and in bad, regardless of a firm's profitability. The trouble with rates is that they vary widely from year to year at the whim of the local authority.

The hon. Gentleman said that he is concerned about the costs being imposed on industry, but he should recall the increases of more than 60 per cent. imposed this year by Labour councils in Ealing and Waltham Forest. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to believe that that has a burdensome effect on small businesses in parts of London. In fact, Labour local authorities in London, to which he is allied, tend to drive out small businesses and deter start-up businesses on a grand scale by the business rate that they impose.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): It is not only in London and southern England that that has occurred. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that 1,000 jobs have recently been moved out of Manchester into leafy Cheshire by the Refuge Insurance Company, which has been driven out of Manchester by the high rates imposed upon it by the Left-wing Labour authority there? Does he share my astonishment that Labour Members of Parliament in the Manchester area are not welcoming with open arms our proposal on the unified business rate?

Mr. Clarke: Manchester is only one of many great northern cities which would benefit. Manchester city council is hostile to private industry and business and drives them out of the city that it purports to serve.

Let us go further north, to Newcastle upon Tyne. A firm there is now paying twice as much in rates for basically the same services as a firm in Croydon. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) is in his place. Jobs have been driven in the direction of his constituency by the Labour party in Newcastle. A major clothing retailer pays more per square foot in business rates in Newcastle than in Oxford street. The national non-domestic rate will remove such random distortions of competition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton pointed out, in the vast majority of cases business in the north and in inner-city areas generally will benefit greatly from the new national non-domestic rate. I am not sure, but I think that the Labour party remains opposed to that.

The combined effect of there valuation and the national non-domestic rate will transfer about £700 million to businesses in the north and the midlands. In Newcastle upon Tyne, business rates will be reduced by 32 per cent., in Manchester by 37 per cent. and in Liverpool by over 30 per cent. That policy will help lift the burden from business and industry in the regions and the inner cities, which the Opposition purport to be committed. I trust that the hon. Member for Dagenham will say that he applauds our decision to bring in a national non-domestic rate which will save business from such anomalies and the vagaries of Left-wing Labour authorities.

Mr. Gould: I am sure that the Minister is well aware that the CBI disagrees with almost everything that he has

said. But if he is right when he says that rates impose such a burden on business, for which there is virtually no evidence, what is he to say to businesses and communities in inner-city areas such as Paddington and Westminster in London, which desperately need help rather than additional burdens and which will clearly have to pay higher rates if a uniform business rate is brought in? If the Minister is right, that that will cripple them, what will he do to help them? He is supposed to be the Minister responsible for inner cities, is he not? Perhaps he will tell us something about that as well.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman contradicts himself in successive sentences. He says that there is no evidence that rates impose a burden, then he quotes as a critic of our proposals the CBI, the main burden of whose representations is that even our new proposals leave too high a rates burden on the commercial and business sector. I think that the Labour party is still defending the old system, largely imposed by the Labour party at the highest levels, of which nobody is in favour. The idea that the hon. Gentleman is now about to launch out on behalf of those businesses that will be affected by rating revaluation in Kensington and Westminster and other parts of the south is an interesting proposition. He obviously thinks that it is right that one should pay more in the high street in Newcastle than in Oxford street for retail premises. He obviously thinks that it is right that one should pay more in Manchester than in Cheshire. If he adheres to that position, far from lifting the burden on businesses and industry, he will drive businesses out of Labour-dominated areas at an even faster rate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I must get on. I have given way generously.

Let me deal with the particular questions raised by the hon. Member for Dagenham — particularly energy prices. The Opposition could not think of a subject for this debate, so they thought of burdens on industry and the increase in electricity prices. The new financial targets were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 3 November for the reasons that he stated. As everybody appreciates, it cannot be denied that we are embarking upon a major period of investment in generating capacity and in new power stations in Britain.

The hon. Gentleman says that the resulting increase in prices will have damaging effects. He should look at successive CBI surveys; they have all shown that electricity prices in the United Kingdom compare favourably with those in the rest of western Europe. Far from it being the case, as he lightly asserted in his speech, that we had successfully been using electricity as a milch cow in raising burdens in past years, the rate of return has in fact been dropping. The effect on the customer is that, even after the increase that is now being contemplated, electricity charges will still be less in real terms than they were six years ago. That is after the charges that we have announced. Large users in the United Kingdom—I am not talking about housewives, scared on their doorstep about their electricity bills — pay among the lowest electricity tariffs in western Europe.

Mr. Leigh: Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the interesting thesis of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that we are merely fattening up the industry for privatisation, when electricity prices increased under the previous Labour Government by 170 per cent. for the domestic consumer and 130 per cent. for the industrial consumer? Did they want to fatten up the industry for privatisation, or was it incompetence?

Mr. Clarke: The previous Government were fattening up the bills rather than the industry. They were not contemplating privatisation but were feeding Government expenditure. The allegation of it being used as a milch cow is much better aimed at the previous Labour Government, who increased real-terms costs and had to attempt to keep up with inflation. If my hon. Friend wants to know more about the comparison between our record and that of the previous Labour Government, electricity prices rose 30 per cent. more than inflation while they were in office. The largest price increase under this Government will be lower than the smallest price increase that we ever had under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: I know that the hon. Gentleman is closely concerned with energy matters, and I shall give way in a moment.

The supply of gas to contract customers is of serious concern to some high users in the industrial world. It is now the subject of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by the Director General of Fair Trading. We have received complaints about British Gas pricing policies from the Gas Consumers Council and from a number of important individual consumers and companies. The hon. Member for Dagenham claims that privatisation will destroy things. When British Gas was privatised, the powers under general competition law were applied to the contract gas market to ensure that its position was not abused. The reference to the MMC shows that those powers are not a dead letters and when we have had the MMC report—in about nine months' time—we shall see whether action is called for.

However, the general position on past and contemplated prices is satisfactory for British industry. It is not easy to find evidence that British industry is disadvantaged compared with its competitors abroad. In fact, the effect on business costs of the prices in contemplation will be tiny if a price increase for electricity of from 8 to 9 per cent. takes place. That will increase industry's costs, on average, by one sixth of 1 per cent. So the move is not as indefensible or damaging as the hon. Gentleman claimed.

Mr. Barron: The right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke earlier about what the CBI reviews have had to say on the matter of energy costs to industry. Will he comment on what the Director General of the CBI said about that earlier this year? He said that he did not see why intensive energy users and many industrial users generally should face the steep increases.

Mr. Clarke: I would quote the CBI's own surveys in answer, and cite the examples that I have quoted to show that large users, whom we accept need special attention, are not badly discriminated against—as compared with their rivals — by the pricing policies of the energy companies — but when they make complaints, as, for example, about gas pricing policy, we have powers to refer to the MMC, and we use them.

On the matter of interest rates, the main point made by the hon. Member for Dagenham throughout was to ask

[Mr. Clarke]

why the Department of Trade and Industry did not speak out more often about these things. By way of a basic constitutional point, within the Government it is the Treasury that acts as spokesman on these matters, and it is not customary in a Conservative Government for one Department to rampage around campaigning against others. When the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was in government, a different system, I know, prevailed.

As has been pointed out, interest rates are not, as the hon. Member for Dagenham believes they are, plucked out of the air and imposed regardless of their consequences on quite a few other economic indicators in the economy. They have an effect on the general level of inflation, which is important to industry. They have an effect on the exchange rate, and it cannot always casually be assumed, as it was by the hon. Gentleman, that as long as the exchange rate goes down against the dollar, that is advantageous to British industry.

We have already had two reductions in interest rates in the past few weeks in response to present circumstances, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has always made it clear that he desires to keep interest rates down as far as practically possible while maintaining downward pressure on inflation. Frankly, if, in the present uncertainty in the financial exchange markets, it came to a judgment between the abilities of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to manage the financial affairs of this country — to choose the proper interest rates and to maintain some stability in international exchange rates —and the abilities of the hon. Member for Dagenham, based on the theory that he espoused in his speech, I believe that most people in business would feel much more confident in the Chancellor's abilities. Right now, he is riding the crest of a wave because of the reassurance that he gives the industrial and commercial community at a time of some uncertainty. As far as I could see, the hon. Gentleman's whole argument favoured a downward pressure on interest rates—indeed, limitless reductions in interest rates. His speech was remarkably reminiscent, in its long analysis of interest rates, of Hugh Dalton after the war, rather than of a vision of social policies for the future.

I think I have touched on most of the hon. Gentleman's points; and I have touched on many other things that he did not mention in the area of burdens on industry. The hon. Gentleman must understand that, in an enterprise economy, a great deal of business success depends on management having the ability to manage, the liberty to take commercial decisions and the time to manage its business free from Government restraint. Management needs open access to reasonably liberal markets without Government policies intervening to distort those markets, in which people have to make judgments.

If the hon. Gentleman accepts all that, he is making progress, but he has a long way to go. If he tries to sell to the Labour party the theme of lifting burdens on industry and management, in addition to all the other themes that he tried to urge on it at the party conference, from the point of view of the national interest I wish him success. I do not think, however, that he has a snowball's chance in Hades of success with the movement in which he now finds himself.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. This is a short debate and many hon. Members wish to speak, so I appeal for short speeches.

5.55 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I support the motion, which concerns the ever-growing burden on industry. I want to speak specifically about the newly proposed electricity increases, although at this stage it is not clear exactly how much and where they will take effect. There is no doubt, however, that industry will be paying more for electricity in April next year.

The electricity price increase is not only a direct attack on industry and on domestic consumers, but is a tax on energy. The Government have stated on numerous occasions that they would avoid putting VAT on energy charges at all costs. They have said that in the House and elsewhere, yet one can only describe the likely 10 per cent. increase as a tax on energy—it is some form of VAT through the back door. The Secretary of State for Energy justifies the position, as the Minister mentioned, by saying that new plants for electricity generation need to be built —presumably starting in 1988-89, the year in which the increase starts. If the proposed increase is required for that purpose, that is a sad comment on the pricing mechanism that has been used and on the way in which the electricity supply industry and the Government have run the industry during the past eight years. If that reason is to be taken at face value, they obviously got things very wrong.

On Tuesday this week at the nuclear forum I put it to Lord Marshall that the pricing mechanism of long-run marginal costs that had been used by the industry had obviously failed. Lord Marshall's reply had little to do with the need for new investment for generation; he merely said that the rate of return on investment should be higher than the current average of 2·75 per cent. It is worth asking why the Government have set those levels of return. First, there is no need for it to be higher. The rate of return took into account the paying off of debt to the country that had to be cleared by 1991. Indeed, the electricity supply industry would then be debt-free. Secondly, it took account of all likely future investment in generating capacity up to the year 2000.

If we examine the industry's medium-term investment plan, published in September 1986—Ministers are now saying that it is out of date, but the ink has hardly dried on it yet—we see that it included a projection of the likely requirement of generating capacity up to the end of the century, and on that basis it had already taken into account capital expenditure within the current pricing structure. The plan states:

> "CEGB capital expenditure for the seven years 1986-87 to 1992-93 shows a small increase compared with the previous MTDP . . . expenditure forecasts also reflect the latest planning assumptions to meet future plant requirements up to the year 2002."

So it is not good enough for Ministers to say that they have to put on the increases to pay for future generation. That is not true, and I wish someone would stand up and tell the real truth.

In announcing the proposed price increase to the House on 3 November, the Secretary of State for Energy could not explain why or how the planning assumptions and forecasts made by the industry about future generating capacity had changed since 1986. The plan went on to say that the tariff increases over the same period, that is, to

1993, would be below the general rate of inflation. This was based on the assumption that there is no significant increase in the industry's financial targets.

The Government have now decided that the industry's rate of return should be increased, but on any assessment that should not be necessary. Electricity is a service industry that makes substantial profits, and without this massive price increase it planned to be debt-free within the next couple of years. Why should the Government push up the rate of return if not purely for the benefit of the Treasury? Even if we accept the need for industry to have a high rate of return, we should examine more closely the figures that we are given. The rate of return of 2·75 per cent. that the Government pose is based on current cost accounting. Most industries use historic cost accounting methods. On the historic basis, the current rate of return is 14 per cent. That is the return on historic cost accounting without charging one penny extra to industrial or domestic consumers from next April.

The CBI has questioned this use of current cost accounting. The CBI asked:

"Why has the target return for the electricity supply industry been fixed at 4·75% "—

I understand that that will be the rate in two years—

"in current cost accounting terms which is the equivalent of 16-18% in historical terms?"

Perhaps the CBI's question could be answered by the Minister who replies to the debate. The director-general of the CBI commented:

"even in markets where companies face considerable market, technical and competitive risks, returns of this order are not being achieved and electricity faces no such risk."

In the end we are left with two propositions and my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) gave one of them. They are the two propositions about why the Government have felt the need to force the electricity price increase on industrial and domestic consumers. In the short term, one reason is to get money into the Treasury. That is a form of indirect taxation and will presumably pay for more tax cuts in the years to come. In the longer term, it is clear that the increases are about fattening the industry for privatisation. Even the CBI has its doubts about the wisdom of that procedure.

The CBI's director-general, Mr. Banham, said:

"By the time the industry is privatised it will have a completely clean balance sheet. Some of the debt could be privatised as well . . . Few manufacturers would consider putting up prices to pay for future capacity."

It is quite obvious that even industry itself believes that it is wrong for the Government to do what they are now doing. The Minister knows quite well what they are doing. The day after the statement of 3 November in the House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House that there was no way that any electricity price increase was to swell the coffers of the Exchequer. He said that it was certainly not a tax.

I wrote to the Chancellor, but to date he has not replied to my letter. I asked where the money would go in the year 1988-89 when this massive increase will go on. Lead contracts for new generation take between five and 20 years, depending on the type of plant, and will obviously not take that money. Where will that money go in that first year when this massive increase averaging 9 to 10 per cent. goes on, if not to the Treasury coffers? If it does not go there, it will gather dust elsewhere. It is obvious where that money will go and no hon. Member should be kidded about that. It will go to the Treasury to be used as a bribe to the electorate prior to the next general election.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am amused by the degree of importance that the Opposition are giving to the CBI, which is now their new-found friend. I do not see any objection to the hon. Gentleman's analysis, even if it were correct—which it is not. As the taxpayer is the investor in the electricity industry, it seems perfectly right that any dividend from that industry should go to the taxpayer. That dividend would be given to all taxpayers.

What does the hon. Gentleman say about the proposition, advanced by the Labour party in the last Parliament and before that, that there was a need to keep electricity prices up in order to support the inefficiencies in the coal industry? All it was seeking to do was to bankroll the National Union of Mineworkers. The hon. Gentleman will remember that Lord Marshall said that if it were not for the need to purchase coal from British Coal under the monopoly agreement electricity prices could have been more than 10 per cent. lower——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a short debate and interventions should be brief.

Mr. Barron: What Lord Marshall said and what has been said recently about the price of coal and about the savings that could be made are not true. In June last year, when the new joint understanding between the coal industry and the CEGB was drawn up, there was an immediate 7 per cent. reduction in real terms in the price of coal. By the end of 1990-91, when the joint understanding finishes, there will be a real reduction in the price of British coal to the CEGB of 18 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should ask the newly privatised British Gas whether it will be able to say in the years to come that it will sell energy 18 per cent. cheaper in real terms. Everybody knows quite well that that will not be the case.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned tax dividends by the Exchequer. There are more than 92,000 domestic cut-offs of electricity each year and many of the people who are cut off never pay a penny in income tax because of their low incomes. I would much sooner reduce the number of cutt-offs and ensure that those people did not have to pay tax through an increased tariff and would be better defended to go through winters and not be cut off.

The House has been grossly misled by Ministers talking about the new electricity price increases and the need of the industry for new generation. A hole has been blown in that argument by the projections of the industry itself, and nobody with any common sense and who has any knowledge of the industry can defend that argument. When he is winding up, the Minister should tell us exactly the reason why we are to have an increase averaging 9 or 10 per cent. in electricity prices next April. He should come clean with the people, including people in poverty households, and say that the increase will be stopped now in order to protect industrial and domestic consumers. The increases are unnecessary, except to fatten the coffers of the Treasury or the calf ready for privatisation.

6.6 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My heart goes out to the Opposition because of their struggle to find topics for Opposition Days that, at the end of the debates, do not result in them holding a bloodstained foot in one hand and the proverbial smoking revolver in the other. Today they could be accused of being a little smarter than usual because they have chosen a subject that is a

[Mr. Richard Page]

little more difficult to interpret and to tie down. They have given themselves just a little more room to manoeuvre. I worked and struggled to find out what the Opposition meant by the burdens imposed on the real economy by Government policies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Interest rates.

Mr. Page: I shall shortly deal with interest rates. At first I thought about unemployment. Then I looked at the employment figures and discovered that the numbers of people in work today is almost identical to the number in work in 1979. I found that the number of people going into work has increased for the last 16 months and that vacancies are higher than they have been for a long time. I thought about the gross overmanning in British Steel and British Leyland and in all the other nationalised industries that were being propped up in the period before 1979, and I said to myself, "Well, that is not too bad." I looked at the growth in the service sector and thought that, obviously, the Opposition would not have a go about unemployment.

Next, I looked at inflation today and at the roller coaster of inflation that we had in the past when it was 26 per cent. plus. I am grateful to the Labour party because if the Labour Government had not run the economy in the way that they did in 1976, I would not have won the by-election in Workington, where we found that the taxes for every working man had gone up because of inflation and that savings had been eroded. The inflation rate now is 4·8 per cent. That is a credit to the Government, and I came to the conclusion that the Opposition would not be having a go at the Government about inflation.

Then I thought about the public sector borrowing requirement. I looked at that and looked again to my time in Workington and remembered at that time it was 9·3 per cent. of gross domestic product. It meant that out of every £5 that the Labour Government were spending they were borrowing £1. I thought that the Labour party would not be foolish enough to have a go at the size of the present PSBR, particularly bearing in mind that this year it will amount to about 1 per cent. of gross domestic product or maybe even zero as the year goes on.

I thought that the debate might be about the total amount of gross domestic product, but a trip to the Library quickly proved that GDP is now 117 per cent. compared with 102 per cent. in 1979. I started to analyse the components that make it up. Output of the production industry is up — my right hon. and learned Friend touched on that matter. As to exports, I discovered that the CBI, which has been prayed in aid by Labour Members with great enthusiasm, concluded in its latest survey that 84 per cent. of directors thought that their companies were doing well, or very well, and were optimistic at their prospects.

Over the past quarter, exports have increased by 10·5 per cent. *[Interruption.]* Manufacturing industry in Britain is beginning to improve—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) wants to intervene he should do so and stop shouting from a sedentary position. I thought that the Labour party would not have a go at our exports, bearing in mind that for the first time, on a consistent basis, exports are increasing. When we took office in 1979, the export figures that were championed by the Labour party were lower than those for 1974. There had been a consistent decline in exports over the past decades, but under the Government they are beginning to increase.

I wondered whether we would be debating small businesses. I thought about the record of the Government on small businesses — what we have done with the enterprise allowance scheme, how we have started small workshops and the lower rates of corporation tax—and I thought that the Opposition would not be daft enough to have a go about those matters.

The truth finally came out, as I watched the acceptable smile on the face of the tiger, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who advanced the case for the Opposition. He produced a melange of economic and political arguments that did not come together. He made great play of the fact that we invest so much abroad. It is true that we have the largest overseas investments of any nation in the world—about $170 billion, which is just ahead of Japan—but what he did not mention was the $5 billion that returns to Britain from those investments. That return must be an exceptional and smart investment.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the wiping out of one fifth of British industry, but he did not mention the overmanning and poor productivity record of British industry.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As to the hon. Gentleman's statement about overmanning, which apparently he attributes to the period before 1979, will he comment on the authoritative National Economic Development Council survey of two and a half years ago that compared Britain's and Germany's manufacturing industry? It demonstrated that, with the same machinery, German productivity was 60 per cent. higher than comparable production runs of British firms. Is he trying to imply that even today British industry is overmanned by 60 per cent.?

Mr. Page: The hon. Gentleman has quoted figures from two and a half years ago. If he had worked in British industry, as I have, he would know that it had the equipment but that it was not using it. It was limiting its production runs, and I have had personal experience of working on production lines when the use of automatic machinery was limited under trade union agreements. Thus, it was not effectively used and overmanning was artificially maintained. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the productivity figures of the past two or three years he will notice, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, that they have increased by 4 per cent. per year and are continuing to do so.

If the hon. Gentleman now visits the Ford plant at Saarlouis in West Germany and compares it with the one at Dagenham, he will discover that in Britain Ford has caught up in productivity , which is one of the reasons why it is investing in Britian. At last, it will receive an adequate return and its machinery is being used to its full capacity. I shall not labour that point because I realise that other hon. Members wish to speak.

The hon. Member for Dagenham mentioned imports but did not mention the opportunity that they give the British manufacturer. The number of cars that are being made by British manufacturers and supplied and sold into the British market, compared with the numbers of imports, demonstrates how the economy is beginning to react to these opportunities.

Right at the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham the truth came out—it was almost slipped in — in the statement, "We need a definite industrial strategy." In those words all was revealed. The Labour party wants a return to the National Enterprise Board and to playing with our industrial companies. I make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister; leave management to manage; leave industry to industrialists; keep politicians out and allow our economy to continue to grow.

6.15 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I share the surprise of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the choice of the subject for debate. The debate has fallen into a predictable pattern. It is sad that a matter as important as British industry should degenerate, in a very short debate, into Labour and Conservative Members trying to score points rather than trying to find common ground that will improve what is, I concede, an improving position.

The Chancellor did not want to be reminded of the consequences of Government policy between 1979 and 1981 — nor would I if I were a Conservative Minister, because it was a catastrophe and history will record it as such.

I readily accept that we cannot continually criticise the Government year in and year out given that we have moved on from those days and that there is evidence of significant recovery in many sectors of the economy. I should have thought, to the extent that it is true, that it would have been welcomed by hon. Members. It does not do any hon. Member credit to appear to want to belittle genuine recovery.

We are entitled to question, in a constructive manner, the Government about certain aspects of their policy to obtain a change of attitude that might enable us to get more out of our economy in the coming years. There is no doubt that the Chancellor of the Exchequer regards the rate of interest as the only mechanism in which he will actively intervene. It is the only instrument of the economy on which he states he has a policy. The consequence of that policy is a genuine burden on industry. It is fair for the Government to say that they have lifted other burdens, but it does not stand up if the burden is not a real one.

Given the interest rates of 9, 10 and 11 per cent., the rate of return that is required when inflation is low is relatively high. High interest rates aggravate matters for manufacturing industries that are involved in competitive trade — whether it be in exporting or in sectors where they are vulnerable to imports — particularly when dealing with a country such as West Germany, which is considering reducing its interest rate to 2·5 per cent. which is a negative inflation rate. That gives German companies a considerable advantage, particularly in sectors of common trade.

The other problem that was raised — the Chancellor of the Exchequer regards interest rate policy as the mechanism to respond to this — was high or unstable exchange rates. With the collapse of the dollar there is a worry that the pound will rise against the dollar, thus repeating some of the problems of 1979, 1980 and 1981. It is sensible to avoid that happening again, particularly when we are experiencing some recovery. The Government should state more clearly what action they will take independently and, more important, in co-ordination with others to ensure some degree of stability and predictability within the exchange rate, which is vital for British manufacturing industry involved in overseas trade.

The House will be aware that the Liberal party amendment has not been selected. The only reason that I allude to the amendment is that it repeats our consistent and insistent plea for the Government to recognise that we must become a full member of the

"Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System."

It is deeply depressing that the Government claim to be in favour of membership, but never get round to becoming a member. In the past two weeks we have had the unedifying spectacle of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister falling out over that issue. Clearly the Chancellor of the Exchequer was about to decide that the time was right for membership, but he was sharply reminded by the Prime Minister that she would not join the system. She will never join it as long as she remains Prime Minister. She does not want to become so closely involved with the European Community.

I believe that the British economy is an essential part of the European Community. We are interdependent. It is extremely unfortunate that we continue to take a very negative attitude towards full membership of the exchange rate system as it would help to bring down interest rates and stabilise the exchange rate.

It was interesting to note that the debate was opened by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) from the Opposition Front Bench. As far as I can see, his only surviving Left-wing credential is that he remains anti-European Community. The debate was opened for the Government by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry who in his utterances daily becomes more hostile towards everything to do with the European Community. Many people in British industry regret those attitudes. They believe that they have been seriously misled by the Government who said that they wanted to take advantage of the opportunities of a widening internal market.

I want to refer to the additional burden of electricity costs, to which reference has already been made. Indeed, I want to refer more widely to energy costs. There is no doubt that energy costs are significant for certain sections of industry. It was facile and insulting for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to say that the Government's calculation is that the average cost for industry would increase only by 2 or 3 per cent. and that that was not an excessive burden. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and everyone in industry is aware that the average hides very wide variations and includes industries in which energy costs account for 15 or 25 per cent. of manufacturing costs. The burden in that context is very serious in terms of competitiveness, and that is wholly unjustifiable. Across the board, the CBI estimates that energy costs will amount to £1 billion in industry. The impact on certain industries is far more serious and it is outrageous that the Government will not recognise that.

Hon. Members have mentioned the reference of British Gas to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for over-pricing. All hon. Members involved during the debates on the Gas Act 1986 explained that that was inevitable. We are exactly where we predicted we would be, and we will still have to wait for an investigation which could take many months.

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

Many industries have been unable to gain access to competitive supplies of gas and the monopoly has been abused and exploited. The gas industry has not changed. The people who ran it in the private sector are running it in the public sector and they are using exactly the same unimaginative old criteria. They are basing the price of gas not on the investment or rate of return, but on the relative price of oil, which has nothing to do with the price of gas. As I represent an area in the north of Scotland, I hope that the investigation into industrial gas prices, coupled with the likely privatisation of electricity, will be used as an opportunity to give people in the north of Scotland a competitive advantage on energy prices.

The Government claim to believe in markets and competition. I find that increasingly difficult to believe because they have done more than any Government to promote huge monopolies which have ripped off the consumer rather than benefited him through competition. We are constantly told in the north of Scotland that we have the cheapest electricity in the United Kingdom because we have hydro power and because, in association with the South of Scotland electricity board, we have a substantial amount of nuclear power which we are told is cheap. If such energy is cheap, I want an absolute assurance that the increases imposed in the electricity industry in England and Wales will not be extended to Scotland. If and when privatisation goes ahead, I want the assurance that our industries will have the opportunity to gain access to cheaper and competitive electricity which will provide a cost advantage.

I could give many reasons why industry should locate in the north of Scotland. However, there are disadvantages in terms of transport and access to the market. Access to cheap energy would be a great compensating factor and that should be properly conceded to us to give us the opportunity to promote new enterprises on the basis of competitive energy prices.

The reforms that are being introduced for business rates —which are an acknowledged burden to industry—have not been spelt out in sufficient detail to reassure many people in business and especially those in small businesses. They believe that the consequence of the uniform business rate is that it will increase the costs for small businesses in remote and relatively poor rural areas because they do not have a rich tax base. That causes real concern. The disparities and anomalies which that will create will have a minor ripple effect, perhaps not comparable with the rating revaluation, but businesses will be hard hit by the proposals. It is extremely unfortunate that the Government have not consulted more widely with business to explore the alternatives.

It is all very well to claim that the business rate should take account of a business's ability to pay. I fully appreciate and acknowledge that, and I agree that many hard-line Left-wing Labour councillors have ignored it to the great detriment of their economies and the people living in their communities. In spite of that, every business absorbs services and generates costs within the local community and there must be some contribution to those regardless of whether they are making a profit. I accept that some of that should be profit-related.

At the end of eight years in power, the Government have some reason to claim that, in spite of their earlier catastrophic mistakes, we are beginning to see some recovery in industry. I do not believe that the Government deserve as much credit as they choose to take, but that is the stuff of politics. There are still burdens on industry that the Government could lift and there is still a division between the impact of the Government's policies on industry and industry's requirements.

It was suggested that we do not understand the full responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry because it shares its role with the Treasury. One of the reasons for Japan's success is that its Ministry of Trade and Industry is dominant over the Treasury. If that was the position in this country, we might have a successful manufacturing industry that could take on Japan, instead of which we are currently enjoying a recovery which must go on for a few years before I am convinced that we are on the right road.

6.28 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I know that time is short and I will endeavour not to speak for too long. It is very important that this matter is discussed seriously because people in British industry and elsewhere in the country will listen to what we say. Therefore, I hope that I may do a modest service to the House if I make a number of comments on the speech made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

The hon. Member for Dagenham dealt with the subject in an extraordinarily frivolous way. He made a number of basic errors in his appreciation of the present position which I believe should not pass without comment. He said that the economy had been running at a low speed until 1986. That is apparently the main burden of the Labour party's complaint against the Government since we came to office in 1979.

That was an extraordinary remark, because the one salient feature about this country's economic performance over the past few years is that, astonishingly, since 1982, year after year, we have consistently had the fastest rate of growth in Europe. That has been the case in only one other year since the second world war — in 1963-64. Indeed, it has been the case in very few years during the last century. One can count them on the fingers of one hand.

If the hon. Member for Dagenham knew more about economics than I suspect he does, judging by his speech, he would know how extraordinarily difficult it is to sustain a higher rate of growth than one's competitors over that length of time. The fact that we could do so without running into balance of payments or other constraints shows the remarkable dynamism and flexibility of the supply side of the British economy during the past few years.

The hon. Member for Dagenham also complained about the level of investment. Of course, I have not been able to check with *Hansard*, but I think that he said that the level of investment in training and in research and development is too low at 8 per cent. per annum. I think that he was confusing it with fixed capital formation in this country, which is 8 per cent. of GDP.

Mr. Gould: I am sorry to say that it is the hon. Gentleman who is confused. The only time that I mentioned the figure of 8 per cent. was to point out that manufacturing investment remains 8 per cent. below its 1979 level. It may be as well if the hon. Gentleman remembers that figure.

Mr. Davies: I take the hon. Gentleman's correction happily. However, if he knew a little bit more about what is happening in industry, he would realise that there has been an interesting secular change during the past two years. Investment in fixed capital formation and in hardware—we know that the Labour party has a fetish about investment in hardware, and always has had—has become relatively less important in expenditures that are related not to current sales but to future sales, which is the way in which I prefer to define "investment". Investment in software has become ever more crucial. Because of accounting conventions, software is written off as a current expense but it is just as important, if not more important, for the long-term productive capability of industry.

Anybody who does not understand that important shift between investment in hardware and investment in software, but simply looks journalistically and superficially at the figures, as does the hon. Gentleman, shows a low level of understanding about what is going on, and what should be going on, in British industry.

I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's position gets even worse. We heard several times that interest rates are the great burden on British industry and that our interest rates are three times higher than those in Germany. That suggests that the hon. Gentleman must have been talking about nominal rates because, although our nominal rates are not quite three times higher than those in Germany, they may be close to that figure.

However, we also heard an interesting and slightly discursive academic lecture about the importance of interest rates balancing the interests of lenders and borrowers, of savers and investors and of interest rates as a price mechanism establishing an appropriate equilibrium between current and postponed consumption. We know all that. The hon. Gentleman obviously read the first part of his textbook on elementary economics, but he did not read on to discover the important and vital difference between real and nominal interest rates.

All that theory makes only the slightest sense if the hon. Gentleman was talking about real interest rates. But they are not higher than in Germany. That sort of confusion could not possibly pass in modern industry, which has increasingly strong, rigorous and professional standards in its use of concepts, language and planning. The hon. Gentleman would be laughed out of any board room, in any self-respecting company, for making such a confusion between real and nominal interest rates.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No, I fear that I have too little time to give way. I am sorry. I am also sorry that the hon. Member for Dagenham spoke for rather a long time, leaving but little time for Back-Bench Members who wish to comment on his speech. However, he was wise to do so because if I had the time, I would be inspired to make a great many more not very flattering remarks about his speech.

I turn now to another matter which is important to the interests of the House and to the reputation and standing of the so-called revisionist wing of the Labour party, with which, I believe, the hon. Member for Dagenham wishes to identify. It is important that the hon. Gentleman gets this matter straight. Again, I am quoting from memory, but I believe that at one point the hon. Gentleman said that no one talks any more about M3, which shows that no one is interested in the money supply. That was an extraordinary elementary mistake. I am sorry to hear a Front-Bench spokesman fall into the trap of the most vulgarised and will journalistic monetarism that I have ever come across and to equate one of the many monetary aggregates with the money supply.

I am sorry to have to give the hon. Gentleman a lecture about elementary economics, but I must tell him that the money supply has existed, exists now, and will always exist, that it will always have an important effect on the real economy and will be intimately related to interest rates. From hearing his speech, I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman knows the difference between an IS-LM curve and a map of the London Underground. Nevertheless, I assure him that the money supply will always exist and that it must always be taken into account by any responsible Government.

It is a superficial and dangerous trap for anyone to equate the general concept of the money supply with one particular aggregate. It is perfectly true that it is no longer the case that anybody takes M3 seriously as a proxy for aggregate demand in the economy. The reasons for that are technical, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman would benefit from a lecture on that subject. However, I do not have the time to give it to him.

Suffice it to say that it is related to technical changes in the banking markets, to the relatively high level of real interest rates throughout the world economy during the 1980s, and to the fact that many financial resources that were previously kept on current account are now kept on deposit account which, I advise the hon. Gentleman, is included in the M3 figure. What is more, many savings are placed on deposit accounts, which have had a high real rate of return during the past few years, which previously would have been invested in instruments that were not included in any monetary aggregate because they were not considered to be part of liquidity.

Suffice it to say also that M3 is one of many aggregates. It is important to consider the sum of aggregates. To decide that because one aggregate no longer effectively tracks aggregate demand we should throw over the whole concept of watching what goes on in the money supply — that was the basis of what the hon. Member for Dagenham seriously suggested this afternoon—is to fall into an error that would be a howler if it were made in the classroom. It is a disgrace when it comes from a Front-Bench spokesman and when it is used in a speech that pretends to set out to the Government the sort of sound, rigorous and professional policies that we need to provide the right climate for British industry in the future.

6.38 pm

Mr. Chris Mullen (Sunderland, South): I shall be brief, because time permits me to make only one point. There have been many references to the alleged success of the economy under this Government. We should spend a few moments to reflect on why this is so. It is not due to any miracle of economic management, to the rigours of market forces on productivity or to the Government's claim that they have lowered taxes which, incidentally, they have not. If there is any one single boost that the Government have given to the economy it has been because the Government have had North sea oil revenues. No other Government

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before have been able to lay their hands on so much windfall revenue, and perhaps no future Government will be able to do so.

In case any hon. Member is in any doubt about that, I refer the House to the figures to be found in *Hansard* of 24 July 1987 in a written answer at column *568*. I have totted up the figures only roughly, but the Government have received £12 billion in royalties, £30 billion in petroleum revenue tax, £11 billion in corporation tax and £4·3 billion in supplementary petroleum duty. If there is any one factor that has enabled the Government simultaneously to preside over 3 million unemployed and to cut taxes, that, rather than any miracle of economic management, is the true explanation and they know it.

What troubles me, and I am sure many people, is what will happen when North sea oil revenues run out, when the music stops and revenue from these instant one-off privatisation sales is all gone. What will the Government do then? Will they invite the Labour party to form a Government to clear up the mess? I suspect so. When they have blown all public assets and all public revenue, there will be nothing left to invest in manufacturing industry. That is the prime reason for the mess which they have got us into.

6.40 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): This has been a short but useful debate and I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on their speeches. The hon. Members for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) also contributed. What the speech of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding lacked in humility was certainly made up for in eccentric indignation.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) appeared surprised that we had chosen this subject for debate. I can think of nothing more opportune than to debate the burden of interest rates on industry. Obviously, one alliance habit will survive into the merged party and that is the nauseating line of trying to score party political points off opponents by accusing opponents of scoring party political points. I have always noted that about alliance Members and it seems that will survive in the phoenix that rises from the ashes.

The Government's response has been entirely predictable. They say that there is better news on output, but fail to mention that it is only now creeping past 1979 levels. They say that there is better news on investment, yet fail to realise that investment is still below 1979 levels and worse than any of our competitors. They say that there is better news on exports, but fail to mention imports and that we are heading for the worst balance of trade deficit in our manufacturing history. They say that there has been some improvement in unemployment, but fail to realise that that is not nearly significant enough to make a real impact on the problems of the regions, inner cities and other areas.

Moreover, the recognition that, whatever the terms of the debate six weeks ago, the past six weeks have been an eternity in the life of the world economy and that arguments that may have been relevant then are not relevant now, was entirely absent. Whatever position is taken, it is beyond dispute that, because of the stock market collapse and what has happened to the world economy in the past few weeks, even the progress that we have made from the depths of recession is now potentially at risk. What was missing from the long speech of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was any attempt to explain what the Government response will be to the potential risk of recession arising from the collapse of the markets in the past few weeks.

We know that billions of pounds have been wiped off stocks and shares throughout the world. That has a recessionary impact. We know that if the United States cuts its budget deficit that will have a recessionary impact. We know that the main and immediate effect of a falling dollar is for the United States to shut out our exports from its markets. We know, too, that there is no way in which this country can avoid the cold recessionary winds that will blow around the world.

In the London *Evening Standard* a few days ago, Stanley Kalms, the chairman of Dixons—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the London *Evening Standard* is now to be treated like the bishops and, apparently from this debate, the CBI. They are no longer the Government's friends. Mr. Stanley Kalms, Coloroll, one of Britain's fastest growing companies, and Fisons, a £1·5 billion company, have all been saying that it is nonsense to assume that we can insulate ourselves from pressures from abroad. We look to the Government for a sign that they recognise that and have a strategy to deal with it. Yet we did not hear one word about that when the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster opened the debate. Perhaps we shall when the Minister replies.

Many of the gains which the Government say British industry has made in the past few months have resulted from the increased competitiveness of British industry, resulting from the fall in the exchange rate some time ago. The Bank of England admitted that in its recent *Bank of England Quarterly*. We have the potential for recession, our exchange rate is appreciating against the dollar and the deutschmark, and the experiences of 1979 to 1981 could be repeated if we are not careful, yet while the world economy moves on, our Government's policy remains static.

Other countries have not been gripped by the same paralysis. Japan has introduced a package of public expenditure, tax cuts and interest rate cuts. West Germany is introducing £7 billion-worth of tax credits and will reduce interest rates tomorrow. Other countries' actions seem to indicate some acknowledgement of the potential for recession. We cut our interest rates by 1 per cent. which only compensated for the election rise in interest rates. Over the past few weeks we have heard nothing except messages from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to President Reagan and Secretary Baker.

Over the past few days I have studied some United States' newspapers to see what has happened to those messages from our Prime Minister and the Chancellor. They may have been scoring headlines here, but they have not rated the footnotes where it matters, which is in the Washington press and the rest of American press. Therefore, now the Government are blaming the Americans. As the *Daily Mail* told us only a few days ago, now it is all the Americans' fault. Having been unable to blame their traditional enemies—the public sector, trade unions, the Labour party and the workshy unemployed—the Government have been reduced to blaming their friends. That shows their desperation.

The Government say, "Let's wait and see what the United States does and what response it has to these changing circumstances." With respect, the United States' response is obvious — it is looking after the United States. I do not blame it for that; I simply say that we should be doing the same for ourselves. Clearly, the United States has decided to compensate for any reduction in domestic demand by pumping liquidity into the system by lowering interest rates. Indeed, as an official of the Bundesbank put it the other day, "It is all very well expecting us to support the dollar, but every time we go and buy a dollar, the United States goes and prints another."

The anti-recessionary measures which the United States is taking will simply visit the recession on our country, unless we take avoiding action now. It is essential that we do. When the Minister replies, will he tell us why we are not reducing interest rates? The CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation, the trade unions and home owners all want that. Only the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and perhaps one or two people in the City are opposed to it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley pointed out, interest rates are a burden on industry, as is the hike in electricity prices. According to the CBI, £900 million will be added to industry's costs because of these electricity prices. The Labour party even has the chairman of the CBI, David Nickson, on its side, which is the ideological equivalent of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) supporting the Government. Even Mr. Nickson is saying that the Labour party is right and that electricity rises are wrong. Again and again, when our Government have the chance to support industry, their deliberate policy is not to do so.

We have tried for a long time to find out from the Government what their strategy is for industry. We have not yet been told, and we want to be told when the Minister winds up the debate, what their strategy is for dealing with potential recession. All we are told by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is that there will be a new set of priorities for the Department. What is virtually impossible to find out is whether that amounts to any more than the activities of a philosophy seminar. Every time that we try to pin down the noble Lord on exactly what he means, we are given a mixture of words that seems to mean nothing. What we can glean, however, is the insight that the Government intend to adopt a hands-off, no-intervention, opting-out policy. What they want for the individual in education and housing, they want for the Government in industry.

The problem that British industry now faces is not the need for the Government to stand back and to abrogate the role of public policy-makers. We need the Government to work in partnership in industry, to help to meet the recessionary pressures and help it to expand. Anyone who looks at the difficulties that British industry will continue to face over the next few years must conclude that, however well the Government say that they have been doing, the key is to expand, and to take the country into the 21st century with a manufacturing industry that can make it pay its way. The Labour party knows that; it is the Government who do not. That is why we shall support the motion tonight.

6.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): In the nine minutes available to me, let me first thank my hon. Friends the Members for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). Let me also say to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that I will carefully examine his remarks, and ensure that he receives a reply from either my office or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made an interesting observation about the need — which always seems to be expressed by the Liberal party — for consensus. To a certain extent, in a way that he may not like, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. If we had to have a consensus, I should like to consider the consensus that the German Chancellors of the Exchequer delivered for their economy throughout the post-war period. If I have a favourite economist and a favourite Chancellor of the Exchequer, the economist would be Euchen and the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be Erhard. Germany developed a social market economy in four crucial years, on principles established between 1948 and 1953, in which it said that its economy would be based on the pursuit of sound financial policies and on the importance of open markets and competition, and that nothing in the social market economy should damage incentives to work.

Those principles sound very familiar to my other favourite economist, the current British Chancellor of the Exchequer. They should also sound familiar to the Liberal party and the Labour party, but they do not. Their colleagues in Germany, the Social Democratic party, adopted those principles in 1959. If there is a tragedy in British post-war economic history, it is that the British Labour party could never bring itself to adopt the same principles. It has too dogmatic a view to espouse them.

We have heard a good deal about the real economy. The real economy employs 21 million people, distributed across various sectors: 14·5 million are in the service sector and 5 million in the manufacturing sector. I wish that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) would say to the 2·3 million employees in the financial services sector that they matter too. They make a contribution to our balance of payments. They are not simply the sellers of money or the money makers, who the hon. Gentleman seemed to believe are not true servants of our economy. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) bowled him middle stump. He pointed out to his hon. Friend that an appreciating deutschmark and an appreciating yen have not been the enemy of their efforts to continue to improve their market share in the world markets. Other non-price factors are of great importance.

I do not believe that Opposition Members have read carefully the latest CBI survey. If they had, they would have asked themselves what a manager in the real economy looks for when assessing his business prospects — the confidence factors, and the decisions that he should be making for his company. The first thing he looks at is his order book, and the news on order books is excellent. Our manufacturing sector grew by an almost unprecedented 6 per cent. last year, and is projected to grow at a faster rate than the general level of growth in our economy. Opposition Members who represent constituencies with predominantly industrial employers should celebrate that fact, and endorse it. We believe that the trend can be continued.

I should like to answer the questions put by Opposition Members in the terms in which they were put. They have shown tonight that they have a quasi-Stalinist approach

[Mr. John Butcher]

to economic history and policy making. I say that because, like Stalinists, they enjoy the rewriting of economic history. Certain events which may have happened did not happen. Certain events can be expunged from the record, and forgotten.

Let us go back three years, when, at long last, the Leader of the Opposition seemed to say that the Opposition had an economic policy. He said:

"Although our motivation and measures would differ from that of the United States President, our method for recovery—of expansionary budgets, of extending credit and of public expenditure — would differ only in the way in which we would insist that systematically, it applied to our whole country."

Six or seven weeks ago, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said:

"The origins of the crash of 87 . . . lie in the mismanagement of the major economies of the West. The United States has spent money borrowed from abroad on other people's goods. It is in deficit . . . It was the structural imbalance which was bound to lead to disaster."

That is what the hon. Gentleman said in *The Times*. In *The Guardian*, he said:

"Above all there is the US trade deficit. There is more than a little hypocrisy in the rest of the Western world's attitude to it."

In my view, there is more than a little hypocrisy in the Labour party's ambivalent attitude to the deficit and the way in which it affects our economy here.

The hon. Gentleman says that we should reverse our priorities. The House will know well what our priorities are; they have been stated many times by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Our priorities are reducing public expenditure, taxation and inflation. The Labour party, we know, would increase public expenditure, depending on which promises we believe, by between £10 billion and £30 billion. There is no way that that level of public expenditure can be sustained without increasing interest rates; yet that is at the heart of the motion.

The Opposition may say that they would increase taxation to cope with that expenditure. Would they wish to increase taxation on profits? On past form, yes. Would they wish to increase taxation on personal incomes? On past form, certainly. If we had not abolished the tax on jobs, it would now be costing us £4 billion per annum. However, if the Opposition rejected that option, they would have one alternative. They could print money, lots and lots of it. As we know, inflation is the father and mother of unemployment. We will not impose any of these burdens on commerce and industry. We reject that proposition.

The hon. Member for Dagenham has put forward a few non sequiturs. He too should be reminded of what he has said recently. In March of this year he said that the Labour party has been

"forced to rummage around in a sort of historical junk shop where the only ready-made ideas are a clapped-out, reactionary dogma, which was barely relevant in the 1930s, let alone in the 1980s."

In January of this year, he said that the Labour party's policies are

"long on dogma and jargon and short on common sense and realism."

It is for the hon. Gentleman's own reasons in his own words that I ask the House to reject the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 267.

Division No. 91] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis

Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil

Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the success of the Government's economic strategy which has so transformed the climate for enterprise; applauds its policy of lifting burdens on business; notes that confidence among businessmen is high and sustained; and believes that British producers and exporters are as a result in a strong position to compete effectively in international markets.

Health and Safety

7.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, noting that Government policies of deregulation and continual cutbacks in the Health and Safety Inspectorate have contributed to an increase in the death and major injury rate of workers in manufacturing and construction by more than a third over the last six years, and noting too that the Government 's persistent policy of putting profits before safety underlies recent civil disasters, and that the present collapse of health and safety provision under the weight of the growth of new hazards, ever fewer inspections and inadequate penalties threatens the lives of workers and public alike, calls upon the Government to reverse the 20 per cent. cut in the Health and Safety Inspectorate, to stop privatisation that puts health and safety at risk and to ensure that all employers provide adequate occupational health and safety services, and to provide funding that acknowledges that worker and user safety is a necessity and not a luxury that can be sacrificed.

The King's Cross fire, the public inquiry into which has now opened, has focused the eyes of the nation on the dangerous cutback in health and safety provisions, that is steadily pushing up the rate of death and serious injury at work. It is already clear, whatever the precise cause of the fire, that the disaster would have been preventable if only essential and elementary safety precautions had not been neglected. It is clear that lessons learned from previous tube station fires have not been applied and staff have not been adequately trained. It is clear too that similar death-trap conditions, now revealed throughout the tube network, mean that such a disaster could have occurred just as readily elsewhere in the Underground system and could happen again at any time. What must cause most concern is that all of these warnings apply equally to much of the health and safety.

The King's Cross disaster, like the Zeebrugge disaster some months earlier, which was equally preventable, made headlines because many people were killed in a single, highly visible, national tragedy. Yet in the past year, 700 people have died at work—that is an average of two every day; 20,000 major accidents have occurred at work which have led to people being seriously disabled; there have been 70,000 cases of disabling occupational diseases; and over 500,000 minor but expensive and painful accidents have occurred at work. That annual carnage has gone almost unnoticed. It is seldom mentioned because it is fragmented, occurring all over the country, and it is regarded somehow as an inevitable consequence of work hazards. That view is wholly misplaced.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Would my hon. Friend agree that a great percentage of those accidents occur in the construction industry, which has the worst record of any industry? Ordinary workers, who go to work every day expecting to do a day's work and go home safe, are either killed or maimed. Is it not time that the Government did something to improve the factories inspectorate, instead of the other way around?

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend, to his great credit, is a persistent advocate of better conditions and greater safety in the construction industry. He is right that of the dangerous industries—construction, agriculture, chemicals and textiles in manufacturing—construction is the most dangerous and has the highest number of deaths. It is correct that construction sites in London have recently been the subject of a blitz by the chief inspector and many

prohibitions have had to be imposed because of the failure to take elementary precautions at an unprecedented rate. My hon. Friend has made a strong point, and I hope that the Government will respond.

There is a view that somehow the roll call of death and serious injury is an inevitable consequence of work hazards, but it is not, because the factory inspectorate's surveys have shown repeatedly that seven out of eight fatal accidents could have been prevented, and two out of three deaths are blamed firmly on inadequate health and safety management. A few recent and, I fear, typical cases will illustrate those facts better than any statistics. I refer to two cases reported in *Safety Management* magazine last month:

"A fine of £1,500 was imposed on the Blue Circle Cement company after an accident in which a worker was killed by a fast-moving conveyor belt."

The company

"admitted to a charge made under section 14(1) of the Factories Act, in that they had failed securely to guard the machinery."

I refer to another case, which again is nothing exceptional:

"A . . . construction worker plunged to his death from an aerial dish when his employers failed to maintain a safe place of work."

The company

"admitted the charge under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, and were fined £750 with £65 costs."

I shall briefly quote three other wholly typical recent cases that show just how low the price of a life at work is now regarded. A 21-year-old was killed by fumes from fire in ICI's fertiliser plant at Teesside. The company was fined £2,000 earlier this year. An 18-year-old apprentice was killed when his clothing dragged him into an unguarded lathe. The company was fined £250. A 16-year-old was killed by fumes from the sludge that he was cleaning out of a tank. The company was fined £500. A labourer died in an unsupported trench when the sides caved in. In 1982, the company allowed another man to be killed in exactly the same way and was fined £1,150. The second death in the same circumstances earlier this year cost it just £5,000.

The Opposition have called the debate because the health and safety situation is fast deteriorating. Since 1981, the fatal and serious accident rate at work has reversed its long-term downward trend and has risen every year since, and it is still rising. In manufacturing, it is 35 per cent. higher than it was six years ago, and in construction it is more than 40 per cent. higher than it was six years ago.

What is responsible for the annually rising roll call of death and serious injury at work? Unquestionably, the prime responsibility lies with the Government's policies of deregulation and continual cuts in the health and safety inspectorate, which is now overstretched and understaffed and is suffering a major morale crisis.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I shall finish this section of my remarks and then give way.

In 1979, the factory inspectorate numbered 742. It is now down to 602. That represents a cut of nearly 20 per cent. On average, registered workplaces now get a visit from a factory inspector once every 12 years. By comparison, before the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974, the average was once every four years. Indeed, firms employing fewer than 25 persons are virtually left to their own devices, without any visits at all, even though small firms are notoriously recognised to be far more accident-prone.

In a radio broadcast this morning on the subject, the Secretary of State said that more resources are available and more visits are being made. He is wrong on both counts. Since 1981, the number of annual visits has dropped by over 10 per cent. The number of investigated incidents has dropped by 34 per cent. The number of notices served by the inspectorate has dropped by 13 per cent., yet the number of known infringements has risen by 11 per cent.

On resources, I can do no better than quote the words of one of the Secretary of State's own inspectors, who recently left. I shall quote from an interview in the *Health and Safety at Work* magazine of February this year. She said:

"I did not leave because of the money . . . I left because I was becoming more and more dissatisfied.

We were given more work and more laws to enforce without the resources to do it. It meant that we could not provide the services to industry which it expected. We were constantly in demand and at the same time criticised by companies about our slowness in being able to react.

Not a day went past without colleagues discussing, as a fairly major item, the state of things, the fact that they could not get things done. We were hearing about people who had applied for jobs elsewhere, people who were leaving. In the last couple of years the numbers who have left have been unprecedented . . . Before we had even got to investigate one particular bad accident, something worse had happened so we would have to go out and deal with that one. And the others started sliding.

There was a number of accidents which I felt very strongly should have been investigated. One has the experience which tells that the accident was just the tip of the iceberg. And the next time you get a phone call from that factory it is because a much more serious accident has happened. The first time it might have been the tip of a woman's finger, the next time it is the hand that has been chopped off.

That sort of pressure was causing people problems because they knew that if they could get to the workplaces soon enough they could prevent things getting worse.

It is depressing, de-motivating and morale was falling."

Those are the words of an inspector who left either at the end of last year or earlier this year.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): The hon. Gentleman spoke about resources. I thought that he would do so at some stage. In our earlier debate today, I made the point that in 1978-79 in real terms, at 1987-88 prices the last Labour Government spent £98·5 million on the Health and Safety Executive. This year, the amount has been increased to £102 million in real terms. Next year, it is to go up to £104·5 million in real terms. Therefore, how does he justify his claim that we have cut provision?

Mr. Meacher: Easily; by two considerations to which I shall draw attention more fully later, but I do not mind stating them now. First, large workplaces have often been fragmented, and there are now many more smaller workplaces that are more difficult to regulate and need more inspectors' time. Secondly, in the recent period, the Government passed a series of new regulations that require a substantial increase in the number of inspectors and inspectorial time to carry them out. I shall come to that matter. I persist in saying that there has not been an increase in resources, there has been a reduction. Otherwise, how does one explain the detailed statement that was made by the disillusioned inspector to whom I referred?

Mr. Fowler: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Government are spending not less but more than the last Labour Government did?

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State must not avoid the key point. More resources are needed for the tasks at hand. If such tasks have enormously increased, the fact that the real terms sum has increased slightly is a wholly inadequate answer. The amount of resources has not increased, it has fallen.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that resources are much thinner? On the Government's own figures, between 1979, the last year of the Labour Government and the current year, there has been a reduction in the general and specialist inspectorate of no fewer than 128 people. That represents a massive reduction, when the total has never exceeded 1,000 and the inspectorate is the backbone in carrying out the safety legislation that the House of Commons passes.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend has re-emphasised my point. Across the board, the number of inspectors has been reduced. It is nearly 20 per cent. below the 1979 level. Personnel on the ground are the ones who count.

Mr. McLoughlin: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not generalise so much. I refer him to British Coal's record. Coal mining is most certainly a dangerous industry. In 1978-79, the rate of fatalities per 100,000 man shifts was about 0·13. During the last year of the board's report, the figure was 0·05. The hon. Gentleman should not generalise, because there is no generalised picture. Regardless of how many inspectors leave, the individual looks after his own safety at the workplace.

Mr. Meacher: The number of inspectors is still a key point. I listened attentively to the hon. Gentleman's statistics, which are based on one way of regarding the accident rate. There are other ways of regarding that rate —some of us think they are more accurate—which do not reveal that pattern but which show that, if anything, matters have got slightly worse. However, I do not want to be sidetracked into discussing one industry, because every industry has problems.

The Government's response, which the Secretary of State will no doubt echo tonight, is that they propose to allocate a further £6·7 million to the health and safety inspectorate for next year. I must make it clear that, while we welcome any improvement, however modest, this is insufficient even to halt the present decline, let alone to contribute to restoring the 1979 position. The Health and Safety Commission sought £3 million for the current year; it was given £1 million. It sought £9 million for next year and it is to get £6·7 million.

It is the number of staff that really counts. As a result of the new money, the Health and Safety Commission now hopes to staff the whole inspectorate—which goes much wider than just the factories inspectorate — to a new ceiling of 3,620 next year. That will not even take staffing back to its level at the start of last year when the figure was 3,655. It will come nowhere near to returning staffing to its level in 1979, when the last Labour Government left it at 4,200.

Furthermore, the Government's £6·7 million does not take account of the extra resources needed to meet new commitments. When the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act was passed in 1974, it was agreed on both sides of the House that to cope with the new work that was foreseen —in hospitals, in promoting public safety and for the self-employed — it would be necessary to increase the number of staff in the inspectorate to 4,400. Since then, there have been two important developments, to which I have already referred.

First, we have many more small, fragmented workplaces which require more inspectors' time. Secondly, and perhaps even more important, the inspectorate has many new commitments which were not foreseen in 1974. As the Secretary of State must be aware, 28 new sets of health and safety regulations have been enacted since that date. The most important of them include the control of major industrial accident hazards, the road tanker regulations, the asbestos licensing regulations, the Food and Environment Protection Act and the gas safety regulations. Moreover, new technology continues to create every more complex and dangerous substances and processes, especially——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: In a moment. The hazards arise especially from the nuclear industry and agricultural pesticides.

Without full protection, workers become industry's guinea pigs. Increasingly, the public, too, expect to be protected from dangers — from cowboy asbestos removers, construction site accidents, chemical plant explosions and hazardous fumes. It is obvious that the 3,620 staff — the ceiling that the Government seem proud to be reaching next year with their new money— falls far short of the level needed to fulfil the statutory duties on the Health and Safety Commission that Parliament deems necessary for the protection of our people.

Mr. Cash: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that he might add to that list the Health and Safety Executive's regulations with regard to human genetic engineering, and that the proposal that the powers should be transferred from the Council of Ministers to the Commission must be resisted? Is he further aware that the Legionnaires' disease inquiry report, which came out this afternoon, shows the Government's strong commitment to ensuring that people are properly looked after in hospitals? Following the campaign of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and me, the Government last year abolished Crown immunity. That is yet another example of the Government's commitment to the preservation of health and safety. The Government have a very good record in all these respects.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman has succeeded only in compiling a longer list of the regulations that the Government have been happy to pass. However, rather like the Athenian democracy of old, they do not provide the resources to carry out the requirements. Such regulations become fairly worthless if one does not provide the necessary resources. Clearly, the Health and Safety Executive and the commission do not believe that they are getting the necessary resources.

The effects of the Government's cuts are both direct and indirect. The most direct effect is that the inspectorate now investigates fewer than 10 per cent. of reported

accidents, whereas in the past all complaints were investigated. However, there is a more insidious effect. By back-door deregulation through continuous cuts in their own inspectorate, by shifting some of the responsibility to local authorities and insurance companies and by allowing more and more employers to self-regulate without health and safety inspections, the Government are signalling to industry that safety standards are being downgraded and that profitability now overrides health and safety. I am not saying that the Government are unconcerned about safety. I am saying that they are far too concerned about profits and their privatisation goals to let their concern about safety stand in their way. The same message is transmitted by the infrequent inspections, rare prosecutions and derisory penalties.

If the Government put such a low value on enforcing health and safety regulations, why should not employers do the same? The Government like to consider themselves a law and order Government. That is why they have built up the police force to investigate, deter and punish law breakers in the community. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Indeed. By the same token, the Government's indifference to investigating, deterring and punishing law breakers in respect of the health and safety regulations in industry is manifest in their building down of their health and safety inspectorate. If business men get that message, the Government alone are to blame. There is an unmistakeable link between apathy and the absence of properly policed laws.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): My hon. Friend talked about the transfer of responsibility to local government, and I have two points to make on that. First, responsibility for petroleum licensing has been transferred to the fire and civil defence authorities, as has the responsibility for regulations governing on-site and off-site plans for large industrial installations which have problems in relation to explosives and hazardous substances. Secondly, while transferring those responsibilities from the Health and Safety Executive to local government, the Government have rate-capped the very authorities that they have asked to provide resources to police the arrangements. If the Government do not lift their expenditure proposals for Greater Manchester by 1 January next year, some 90 uniformed staff, most of them involved in policing the arrangements, will be lost and there will be a freeze in recruitment.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority and knowledge about the fire service. He is right that by transferring responsibilities from the Health and Safety Executive to local authorities, while at the same time penalising and limiting those authorities' resources, the Government are engaging in a form of surreptitious deregulation with consequences to which I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) will refer at greater length if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

If industry sees Government persistently scrimping, and paring away their own inspectorate and continually stressing cost-cutting privatisations at the expense of standards, and if it sees a regulatory net that is now so loosely cast that the offending fish virtually have to volunteer to be caught, the tragic drip, drip of deaths, maimings and injuries will continue to grow, as it has for the past six years.

The Government are intending to expand their approach to health and safety still further. In the White Paper "Lifting Burdens", they said—it was repeated in another White Paper, "Building Businesses, Not Barriers" — that they would raise the threshold for the requirement to prepare written safety policies from five employees to 20. At a stroke, that will exempt the majority of companies from the requirement to produce a company safety policy. Yet written policies and procedures are the essence of good health and safety management.

The Government, in particular the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, cannot seem to understand that they are starting from the wrong premise. Small firms do not consider health and safety inspections a burden. They do not want deregulation. They want more help, not less —after all, it is given free—to learn how to prevent and tackle uncontrolled hazards, accidents and health damage to their work force. Employers understand all too well the cost of occupational accidents and ill health—that cost represents anything from 2 per cent. to 15 per cent. of the wage bill, depending on a company's record.

If only the Government equally well understood the cost to the community. One hundred million working days are lost through occupationally induced sickness and ill health, at a cost of more than £4,000 million a year. Most of that cost is borne by the NHS and the taxpayer. Those figures are from the Government's own Health and Safety Executive estimates. Surely, against such a huge cost to employers and the community, such savings on health and safety inspections can be seen to be a massive false economy.

It is time to call a halt to the slide in health and safety standards. It is time to stop deregulation by the back door, whereby companies can flout the law without fear of detection. Indeed, even if companies are prosecuted—it is rare—last year the average fine was £475: a penalty that is so derisory that many regard it as a 'nod and a wink' to continue breaking the law.

It is time that the Government's leaders set an example. What message is sent to industry when one of the Government's Whips, Lord Hesketh, was recently fined £850 for failing to protect his employees from cancer-causing arsenic in a timber treatment pesticide? That offence is similar to one for which an American director was recently gaoled.

It is no good the Secretary of State telling us, as I am sure he will — he did so this morning — that he is increasing funds for the health and safety inspectorate by £6·7 million when, at the same time, the Home Secretary is demanding a £24 million cut in fire brigade spending for next year. It is no good the Secretary of State telling us that health and safety resources are being used more efficiently when, at the same time, the London fire authority is receiving no block grant because its grant-related expenditure is too far below maximum expenditure levels.

I submit that a Government who cut any of the critical public services that I have mentioned in the interest of greater private profit are neglecting the fundamental duty of Government to protect their citizens. This morning the Secretary of State said that he did not want health and safety to become a party political issue. Nor do we. However, it will depend on whether Government policies reflects the fact that health and safety is not a residual, not a desirable to be paid for if there is some money left over, not a luxury to be sacrificed, but an absolute necessity. It

[Mr. Meacher]

is because Government policies do not reflect that — indeed, they reflect the reverse — that we are pressing this motion tonight.

7.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, to leave out from "House" to end and add:

"noting the Government's policy for replacing outmoded legislation with a new regime which maintains or improves health and safety standards tailored to modern needs, recognises that the prime responsibility for the reduction of accidents to workers lies with the employers, employees and others at the workplace; acknowledges the regulatory and other work of the Health and Safety Commission; and welcomes the Government's support for the Health and Safety Commission's efforts in the field of health and safety at work and in the community.".

I do not accept a number of things that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has said. I do not accept that the Health and Safety Commission is underfunded or has been underfunded. In fact, funding is higher in real terms than that provided by the previous Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman's inability to answer that point directly was clear to the House. I do not accept the death and accident figures that the hon. Gentleman has set out, nor do I accept his earlier assertions regarding occupation-related ill health. I do not accept that the only criteria for judging policy are resources, money, and the number of inspectors. That judgment leaves out the crucial responsibility that individual employers and employees must accept.

I believe that it is absurd to suggest that, in some way, the private sector has a worse record regarding health and safety than the public sector. There is absolutely no evidence to support that.

Mr. Meacher: I did not say that.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but will he also concede that many private companies have an outstanding record of concern and success with regard to health and safety? I wish to set out what the Government are planning to spend, the number of new inspectors that we intend to appoint and touch on the latest figures, to be published later this month, on deaths and injuries.

At the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, I welcomed the fact that he accepted that there is a degree of common ground. I believe that that should exist between the main parties regarding this issue. In the past there has always been a substantial element of common ground based on a genuine, shared concern and on a spirit of positive and constructive co-operation. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is an outstanding example of that common ground and co-operation. That legislation was drawn up and drafted by a Conservative Government and was put on to the statute book by an incoming Labour Government. So there has been a history of bi-partisan co-operation—and rightly so.

Health and safety is an issue of vast complexity, affecting so much of modern life. Work sites vary from factories to farms, offices to building sites, coal mines and nuclear power stations. As well as normal work site safety, the Government and the Health and Safety Commission have to consider the way dangerous goods are packaged and transported, ensure that staff are not subject to violence at work, and take account of a wide range of issues such as AIDS and genetic manipulation. As well as considering people at work, we also have to consider the public who might also be affected by industrial accidents. So the Government's task is to make sure that our health and safety arrangements are fitted to cope with the needs of a modern society and a changing and expanding economy.

The key to dealing with those changes is set out clearly in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. That places a duty, first and foremost, upon those at the work place — employers, the self-employed, employees and others. Against a background of so much change and complexity it is only they who can be sufficiently familiar with their working systems and on the spot, to identify when things are going wrong and put them right. That is a fundamental point that we must always remember whenever we talk about what the Government can, or inspectors should, do about health and safety. We can foster the right approach and inspectors can push, encourage and advise — but the foremost responsibility rests with those at the front line, working at the work place. They have to be helped, not only by inspectors, but by the full resources of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive in setting standard; assessing new substances and hazardous installations; giving medical advice; and advising on the practical steps needed to achieve better health and safety.

Clearly, the Government recognise the essential role of inspectors. I fully support their vigorous approach. Unfortunately, sometimes that is the only way to ensure that those in the front line carry out their responsibilities. Last year, factory and agricultural inspectors made more than 200,000 visits. In the course of those visits they issued some 4,300 enforcement notices, initiated over 2,000 prosecutions and set in train many thousands of improvements by means of written or verbal instructions.

But standards are not improved simply by picking off the worst. It is also important that the Health and Safety Executive carries out its advisory work as well. While it is unfortunately true that a small number of employers may take short cuts on health and safety, we should remember that when most employers transgress it is out of ignorance, not malice, and that it is much more effective to give advice than to have to pick up the pieces after an accident has occurred.

It is for this reason that great emphasis has been placed on the publication of guidance booklets. We have issued something like 4 million in the past 12 months, and one particular booklet to be published next spring will bring together a complete package of health and safety advice for small firms and for those setting up in business for the first time. Getting the message across is not easy and success reflects the close understanding that the Health and Safety Commission has of the needs and difficulties in industry. Health and safety, therefore, is not just a question of more money and more inspectors. It is also a question of giving advice and encouraging people to accept that advice.

The Government seek also to ensure that the commission has the resources that it needs to do its job. During a period when we have sought to improve efficiency and value for money in all parts of the public service, we have ensured that the commission's provision in real terms has always been as good as that made by the last Labour Administration. Indeed, for most of the period

it has been better. We are also always receptive to any approach from the commission and during this year we have increased its resource provision; with Parliament's approval we shall do so again in the Winter Supplementary Estimates.

Next year, as the hon. Gentleman has conceded, total funding will increase by £6·7 million compared with the previous White Paper provision for 1988-89. This represents an increase of 6·7 per cent. on expected expenditure. The chairman of the commission has welcomed this increase and confirmed that it will enable the executive to increase the number of inspctors. Moreover, through their own internal arrangements to improve efficiency and effectiveness, the executive now gets considerably more value for money from its resources. For example, inspectors no longer make their calls on a simple periodic basis. Each workplace is now assessed and given a rating. This means that where there are real problems, or where there is potential for things to go badly wrong, as at chemical sites for example, there are more regular vistis than under the old regime.

Let me set out what has been achieved in recent years. First, and very important, in the area of ill health caused by occupational exposure to dusts and chemicals, the achievements of recent years have been very substantial. Illness due to exposure to materials such as lead is now virtually a thing of the past. Although people are still developing asbestos-related diseases, this is the grim heritage of past mistakes and previous lack of knowledge, whereas our standards now should mean that we are not storing up problems for the future. No one who visits our industries and goes out into our factories can help but notice the sophisticated exhaust systems, the enclosed cabinets and the automatic dispensing units, all of which keep workers protected from chemicals.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. Is he saying that, for example, asbestos strippers are subject to qualification and examination by the commission or is it the case that for £50 any cowboy can get a licence and set to work? Is it not true that people have recently been prosecuted because of their cowboy activities when dismantling power stations in Yorkshire?

Mr. Fowler: I will look at the point raised by the hon. Gentleman, but I think that he would concede my central point, which is that ill health caused by occupational exposure has been dramatically reduced rather than dramatically increased. These improvements have been reinforced by new regulations, for example on asbestos, lead, and ionising radiation. The forthcoming regulations on noise will make a huge difference to the quality of life for many people. And, perhaps most important, there are the proposed Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, which I look forward to receiving in the spring.

I believe that when people look back at this era, they will say that this decade has been, and is continuing to be, one of the great milestones in health and safety. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act was hugely important, but it was also an enabling Act, under which the original and continuing intention was to modernise, rationalise and improve the earlier regulations in health and safety. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is confusing deregulation with reform. He seems at times to prefer the old legislation, made piecemeal from the mid-19th century onwards, which the commission is steadily and vitally replacing by a new regime tailored to modern hazards and modern needs. In addition to those I have just mentioned, new regulations for major hazards, the notification of new substances and the safe transport and packaging of hazardous materials, cover subjects which were previously untouched.

In the area of major hazards, this country now has the most sophisticated controls in western Europe—in our regulations for notification, in the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations, and in our planning arrangements. At the same time we have been removing outdated and burdensome requirements. For instance, the 1987 Safety in Harbours Regulations replaced some 280 byelaws, which were often more appropriate to a bygone age and enormously complicated for vessels to comply with as they moved from port to port and found different requirements in each.

All new proposals are subject to cost-benefit analysis. The new legislation is better, more flexible and more responsive to industry's needs, and better reflects modern conditions. Nonetheless, standards have in all cases been strictly maintained and we are laying down a framework for health and safety which will carry this country into the next century and which will match or better that of any other country in the world.

On the subject of fatal and serious accidents, I am now able to give the House the most up-to-date figures, which the commission will publish later this month. The total number of fatal accidents to all employees and the self-employed last year was 390, which is the lowest figure on record. With the possible exception of the Netherlands, our fatal accident rate is lower than that of any other member of the European Community, or any other leading country. Clearly I am concerned at the increase in injuries resulting from accidents recorded in the period to 1985, but again there are hopeful signs. The latest figures, to be published later this month, seem to indicate that these have now levelled off, and naturally our objective is to bring them down.

On the question of deaths caused by occupation-related ill health, there can be no comprehensive figures. We know of some of these deaths from a number of sources, but inevitably many go unreported. What I can say quite categorically, drawing on the expert opinion available, is that there has been a vast improvement over the years in this area and that this improvement continues. Also, many of the deaths which now occur reflect exposure to hazardous substances long ago.

I would like to refer briefly to the tragic events at King's Cross, to which the hon. Gentleman referred at the beginning of his speech. The Government have announced that they will be making a contribution of £250,000 to the King's Cross disaster fund in the hope that this will encourage others to join in helping the bereaved and those who suffered. This will in no way affect any claims for compensation. Immediately after the fire, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced a formal investigation under the Railways Act, and one of the team of four assessors will be Dr. Roberts of the Health and Safety Executive. The findings will be made public. I hope that the House will agree that it would be premature and unwise to speculate on the cause or the contributory factors before the formal investigation has completed its task and report. If there are found to be any

[Mr. Fowler]

shortcomings in safety practice or procedures, they will of course be pursued vigorously by London Regional Transport and the Government.

At this stage, however, I should remind the House that since 1984 the Government have approved substantial year-on-year increases in investment in the Underground, rising from £135 million in 1985-86 to £199 million this year. Investment will exceed £200 million next year and much of it is aimed at renewing and modernising the system and thereby enhancing safety. The renewal of lifts and escalators accounts for some £15 million a year and, in addition, specific expenditure of some £5 million annually is allocated for health and safety purposes such as fire prevention measures.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The day before the tragic fire at King's Cross, a meeting which I and my colleagues from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities fire services committee were due to have was cancelled by the noble Lord the Earl of Caithness. We were to discuss the financing arrangements for the London fire brigade and others. Will the right hon. Gentleman help to rearrange that meeting, so that urgent consideration can be given to the fact that the London fire and civil defence authority will have to consider the loss of hundreds of uniformed staff which, against the background of the tragedy at King's Cross and the death of the fireman there, will be wholly unacceptable? Will the right hon. Gentleman use his good offices with the Home Secretary to make sure that that meeting takes place as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Fowler: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about that and I shall certainly undertake to pass on what he has said to the Home Office Minister concerned and see what can be arranged.

I have dealt with the past record but I entirely accept that no one should be remotely complacent about the health and safety position. The aim must be to improve the position further—to reduce deaths and injuries. Let me tell the House of four major objectives that we are pursuing.

First, the extra resources that are being made available will mean that the commission can recruit new staff. As compared with the present, it will have 40 more factory and agriculture inspectors in post next year — the maximum additional number that the executive can take in and train in one year. It will also be able to recruit additional numbers of other specialists and inspectors to carry out the other activities that I have outlined. Altogether, the executive will have 100 more staff next year than its present strength.

Secondly, inspectors will be concentrating more on targeted inspections and investigations. These will be focused where they are most needed—where the risk is high; where standards are poor; where management control is weak. In other words, we are seeking to prevent problems before they occur, rather than reacting to them.

Thirdly, we are adjusting the pattern of our inspections to accord with modern industrial conditions. Our inspectors will be concentrating next year particularly on small firms and construction. The factories inspectorate will enhance its programmes to identify new, small companies. The Government do, of course, expect the same levels of safety from small firms as they do from larger ones. Many small firms achieve high standards off their own bat, but others need the help and advice of the Executive.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, despite those improvements in working techniques, which I am sure are welcome, and the increases in the numbers that he has given, the 40 extra factory and agricultural inspectors next year compares with a cut since 1979 of more than 140? Does he further agree that the increase in the overall inspectorate of 100 compares with a cut since 1979 of about 600?

Mr. Fowler: There has certainly been, as I said this morning, a reduction in the number of inspectors, but at the same time the ratio of the number of inspectors per thousand employers has not only remained stable during the period of this Government but has shown an improvement on some of the periods in the 1970s.

Special attention will also be given to construction; indeed, about one fifth of the factories inspectorate will concentrate full time on construction. The series of blitzes, in which inspectors work in teams from street to street, concentrating at different times upon different parts of the country, will continue. That will be backed up with publicity with the aim of getting the message across, to employers and employees alike, that they have to put safety right in their industry.

We shall, with the HSC, be keeping a careful watch and consultation is planned for new regulations to provide for better coordination between contractors; to require more safety officers on site; and to require more construction work to be notified to the executive. In addition, we intend to introduce regulations, for which a consultative document has been issued, which will require safety helmets to be worn by law.

Fourthly, the nuclear installations inspectorate is also being strengthened. Nuclear safety policy is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, but it is from my Department that nuclear inspectors are funded, as part of the Health and Safety Executive. To encourage recruitment, we have substantially increased the salaries on offer, which has led to a very successful recruitment campaign. This will give the commission a record 120 nuclear inspectors, which is what they asked for, and of the quality that they want.

Health and safety is a vital matter; clearly, on that I share the concern of the hon. Member for Oldham, West. It is something that should concern all of us day in, day out, week after week, year after year. It is an area where genuine co-operation is needed between Government and industry. The record has been good. We have sustained the Health and Safety Executive by ensuring that it was properly funded and by making it more efficient and more effective. We have gone out and put over the message that health and safety is vital and that we can offer employers advice on good practice and methods of protection.

However, we do not believe that inspectors and inspections alone can improve health and safety. Health and safety can be improved only by a framework of good law and the recognition that safety in the workplace is the direct responsibility of individual employers and employees. It is the responsibility of everyone in this country, and our aim must be to improve the position still further.

8.6 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The measures and increases that the Secretary of State has talked about, minimal though they be, are indeed welcome. But putting legislation on the statute book is one thing; implementing it is another. It is a condemnation of society in general that it takes a tragedy such as the King's Cross fire before we can debate such serious matters in the Chamber.

We need to remind the House that over the years the introduction of fire safety regulations has been in response to particularly serious fires which have usually resulted in large loss of life. The Factories Act 1961 resulted from a fire in a factory in Keighley in Yorkshire in 1956 when eight deaths occurred. The Office, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 was the result of a fire at Henderson's store in Liverpool in 1960, when 11 deaths occurred. The Licensing Act 1964 resulted from a fire at the Top Storey club in Bolton in 1961, when 19 deaths occurred.

As a result of the report of the Holroyd committee in 1970 and the increasing number of serious hotel fires, the Fire Precautions Act 1971 was introduced. As a result of the Ibrox Park tragedy in 1972, when 66 football supporters lost their lives, the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 was introduced. Perhaps legislation will follow from the King's Cross tragedy.

Why do we need tragedies and the loss of life before Governments of all complexions act on behalf of the general public? For my union, the Fire Brigades Union, it was indefensible that the Government had to wait for a tragedy such as that witnessed in Bradford before introducing legislation to cover all places of public assembly.

Tonight's debate takes place in the shadow of the tragedy at King's Cross. It precedes the King's Cross inquiry and is set against the background, to which my hon. Friends have referred, of cuts in the fire service, which will affect the ability of fire prevention officers and departments adequately to look after the health and safety not only of firemen but of members of the general public, under the various pieces of legislation to which I have just referred. The inquiry will take place against a background of the Government's continuing to attack the fire service through their intention further to reduce expenditure, which will affect standards of fire cover and fire prevention departments that already cannot cope with the requirements of public safety.

The nature of the tragedies and the inadequacy of some of the legislation was brought home by a fire in Sheffield in 1984. The fire in Brightside lane burned for six days and involved 630 fire fighters. It practically destroyed a massive warehouse, causing £20 million worth of damage. In February, the Health and Safety Executive said that no prosecution would be brought in connection with the Brightside fire in Sheffield, even though many individuals, as well as the fire authority, were open to criticism for it. The executive reported that, as far as individuals were concerned, it had only been a normal fire fighting incident, and no extra inquiry was required. It took the vigilance of a member of my union — Terry Smith, the branch secretary of the FBU—to report that more than 100 fire fighters were suffering from ill effects, 60 of whom were still suffering six weeks after the fire.

Pressures from press publicity, and not from the Health and Safety Executive — it was stretched anyway — and pressure from the Fire Brigades Union moved the then Minister with responsibility for such matters, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), to ask the Health and Safety Executive to carry out a full investigation. It found gaps in the abilities of the inspectors to look after their own premises. The executive found that the warehouse had not been visited since 1980, four years before the accident. It found that the fire brigade that had the responsibility under the Fire Services Act 1947 to obtain necessary information about the building for fire-fighting purposes had visited it only six years before the incident took place.

There is much to be criticised in the back-up that is necessary after incidents of this kind, particularly in relation to the effects on firemen and the monitoring of the fire's ill effects. It was found that large quantities of asbestos released by the fire had not been deposited because the day was snowy and damp, but that, if the day had been dry, asbestos fibres would have been in the air. The men went in without breathing apparatus—despite the fact that it was available.

Asbestos has already been mentioned. Nobody knows what levels of the chemical are safe. The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), then Minister with responsibility for health and safety, said in 1983:

> "We must therefore assume that a single fibre of asbestos could do real damage which may not be seen for about 20 years or more."

That is the prospect for so many who work in the building industry, the construction industry and the fire service.

On top of the inadequacies in the Health and Safety Executive's attempts to look after the interests of the general public and workers, there is now a review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. My union, along with many other organisations, is distinctly worried about the present moves of the Government. They are intent on lifting the burden of fire prevention — as they see it — from industry. That will lead to increased losses from fire, and more damage and deaths. A document sets out the proposals, which have been designed in such a way as to provide a new method of fire prevention, using the self-regulation process, aided by flexibility on the part of fire authorities in monitoring standards. There have been examples of flexibility in the construction industry. The Health and Safety Executive has shown that, when profitability in the construction industry is set against self-regulation, there is unfortunately no contest. Profitability will always win the battle.

There is talk in the fire brigades of privatising certain sections—including fire prevention—which will mean a deterioration in the service. Her Majesty's inspectorate should have a complement of between 12 and 13 inspectors, but it lacks five of those. Instead of carrying out their traditional role of examining the efficiency of individual services, the inspectors who are doing investigations around the country are carrying out exercises at the Government's behest to discover how to cut jobs in the fire service. That culminated a short time ago in Wales, where, because of a threat of industrial action, a local authority sacked the whole fire service in south Wales. That is what the Government's cost cutting is about. My union—the Fire Brigades Union—will not co-operate with inspectors who try to cut jobs in the fire service.

[Mr. Terry Fields]

On Friday last, the nation mourned. I am not ashamed to say that I cried, too, when I saw my comrades in uniform on the streets of London at the funeral of that brave fireman. We mourned then, but today we have from the Government a report that 800 jobs are due to go in the same London fire service that we applauded for its courage and heroism last Friday. In west Yorkshire, south Yorkshire, the west Midlands and on Merseyside, fire brigade jobs will go. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 firemen's jobs will be lost.

The lesson for firemen is that no section of society is immune from the economics of this Tory Government and the cuts that flow from their policies. The devastating effects of the cuts in the fire service will be seen increasingly — God forbid — in more King's Cross-type tragedies, deaths and sufferings. It is intolerable that fire prevention and health and safety should be treated in that way.

I turn now to cuts that have been made in health and safety provision to protect our young people in schemes, such as the YTS, that the Government have set up. In the five years between 1980 and 1985, 28 young people died —about six a year—on the Government's schemes. One thousand suffered major injuries while working on Manpower Services Commission training programmes. The scandalous aspect was that the Government removed the requirement from employers to notify their local careers offices of when a young person became employed, because it was said that that was too burdensome. The inevitable result was that young people were injured, maimed and killed on some of the Manpower Services Commission's schemes.

The latest figures that I have for YTS — as of 15 September — show that since the YOP schemes which the Labour Government unfortunately brought in as a stop gap — *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members can laugh, but we are talking about the death of young people, which is a serious matter. They should behave themselves.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Fields: Sit down.

Forty young people have died — nine of them in 1986-87. One thousand, four hundred and eighty-seven have had major injuries, and 14,312 have sustained minor injuries. The figures show that it is 30 per cent. more dangerous to work on a YTS scheme than to work in industry—yet the jobs are in much less dangerous areas of industry, including the service industries.

Manpower Services Commission reports show that the problem of trainee supervision and control might lie at the root of some of the serious problems. Under the YTS, the Manpower Services Commission has abrogated its direct responsibility for the health and safety of young trainees in favour of the 5,700 management agencies. But Conservative Members laugh at the problems facing young people, at their deaths and at the horror experienced by their families.

The Manpower Services Commission has only one co-ordinator in each area office. Their responsibilities only partly include health and safety, and they are retired factory inspectors who are employed on part-time consultancy contracts. By effectively privatising control of health and safety in the hands of the managing agents, the Manpower Services Commission has no idea of how, or even whether, agreed changes in training schedules are being implemented in the thousands of sponsors' workplaces in which trainees receive job training and work experience. The Health and Safety Executive has admitted that it is unable to keep in step with inspections because of a lack of resources to cover the thousands of new work places that have taken on trainees.

The fall of 20 per cent. in the number of HSE inspectors between 1980 and 1986 has occurred because they have moved from comprehensive workplace inspections to "selected basis inspections" based on computerised inspection rating systems. Nowadays, the computers say where an inspector should pay a visit. In 1985-86, only establishments that were "highly rated" in terms of "potential risk", those that employed more than 250 people and that had not been visited since 1980, were inspected. That is the level of care in our society.

In 1985, in his new year message, Dr. John Cullen, the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, said:

> "If 1985 follows the pattern of previous years then some 500 people starting back to work this January will die as a result of accidents at work before the next New Year celebrations. The pressure of today's economic climate must not prevail over the essential needs of safety."

The philosophy of the Government prevails over the safety of ordinary people. The Prime Minister is on record as saying that it is her intention to rid Britain of Socialism. For "Socialism" substitute health and safety at work, the National Health Service, the welfare of the people, state education and the protection of old-age pensioners, because that is the Socialism that the Tory party wants to get shot of.

I mean no disrespect to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but you know that each day the Chaplain comes into the Chamber and prays for five minutes. The worthies on the Government Benches pray with him for divine intervention. After five minutes the Chaplain leaves the Chamber and the Government go about the business of attacking the living standards and the health and safety of our working people. What religion do the Conservatives follow and to what god do they pray? Perhaps during the five minutes in the Chamber the incantation should be, "For those whom we are about to deceive let the Lord make us truly thankful."

The system that the Tories support is built on exploitation and profit. The unpaid labour of workers is the wealth creamed off by the big business interests that the Conservatives represent. One cannot hope that the wealth creators, the wage earners, working people, will be treated any better than plant and machinery or a commodity that is bought and sold. Things are bad now, but in the inevitable slump that will follow the crash in the world's stock markets the problems facing us all will increase the health and safety will be even further disregarded in the pursuit of profit.

By their policies since their election in 1979, the Government have shown a callous disregard for the dignity of working people. Inevitably the number of accidents and deaths will increase. Public relations exercises, such as the Prime Minister dressed in black or the Minister for Health visiting hospitals, are seen by ordinary people for what they are — a return to the scenes of the crimes. Increasingly, working people see them as a cynical self-publicising exercise. Despite the Prime Minister's claim that she will rid Britain of Socialism, workers will realise, from their own experience in the past eight years and from the period ahead that will be difficult

for working people, that the general conditions of life—including health and safety—cannot be maintained, let alone improved, in this system. As members of the Labour party, we must say consistently that only through the Socialist transformation of society will working people be afforded the dignity that they deserve and that we demand.

8.24 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) would not expect me to follow his line of argument. I certainly promise that I shall not be nearly as tasteless or, I hope, as controversial as the hon. Gentleman. In common with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, I believe that health and safety should have a bipartisan approach. I shall concentrate on one very important aspect of safety, safety in the home. I realise that my right hon. Friend's Department does not have direct responsibility for this, but he will know that some of us are concerned about the rate of progress in clearing up the anomalies in the regulations that cover inflammable goods in the household and children's toys.

I understand that at present lounge suites are controlled by safety regulations but that beds and mattresses are not. Girl's nightdresses must be fire resistant, but boy's pyjamas need carry only a warning. Dressing gowns must be fire resistant — unless they are made of terry towelling. Such items as oven gloves and ironing board covers are not covered by regulations, although they represent one of the worst fire hazards in the home. Children's toys must be safe in respect of sharp edges and toxic materials, but they can still be a high fire risk.

I know that the Consumer Protection Act 1971 imposes a general duty to trade only in safe goods, but in the area of household goods and toys more detail is required. I am also aware that the Minister with responsibility for Consumer Affairs has issued a draft code of practice about upholstered furniture. I welcome the fact that that code is to be mandatory rather than voluntary.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman talks about the code of practice. I ask him to join his hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and me later this evening and sign an early-day motion that is critical of the fact that, during its implementation, the code of practice will allow for a three-year period for the sale of highly inflammable and toxic substances. If certain articles catch fire, then after two and a half minutes one is unlikely to get out of the property; in three minutes one will not get out, and in four minutes one will be dead. That is the reality of the changes that the Minister is attempting to introduce. They are changes, but not basic changes in the safety requirements relating to these inflammable and toxic substances. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in the subject, he should sign the early-day motion and force the Minister to impose an absolute ban on these disastrous materials that are killing 300 people a year.

Mr. Ward: I note what the hon. Gentleman says and I congratulate him on making his third speech today in the Chamber.

The Institute of Trading Standards Administrators has commented on the proposed code and I hope that the Minister will listen carefully to the experts in this area. Among its comments, the ITSA has suggested a tightening of the code where it covers combinations of fillings. It surely makes sense for the Government to take this opportunity to outlaw some of the more dangerous combinations of materials that are used in household goods.

I should also like the Minister to look again at his proposals for labelling. If they are to be of value, labels must be clear and unambiguous to the consumer, who will not generally be an expert on this subject. I suggest that some of the labelling requirements do not meet the criteria of being clear and simple. If they were clear and simple, it would help not only the consumer but the producer and the trading standards officers who would have the job of enforcement.

I spoke earlier about the anomalies in the fire-resistant requirements for children's clothing and toys. I fully appreciate that we can never attain 100 per cent. compliance with fire regulations in this area. The unknowing relative who makes clothes or toys from unsuitable materials is one obvious example of our difficulty.

However, we can and we should protect the public from the supplier who produces or imports goods that are a potential hazard. I have no hesitation in saying that, if this results in some small increase in the price of the articles, it is a small price to pay for peace of mind and protection from the misery of a household fire involving children. Will the Minister consider the problems with regard to the second-hand goods market? It is much more difficult to impose reasonable safety standards, but it is an important sector and it needs further study.

I am indebted to Mr. Peter Cobb, the county trading standards officer for Dorset, for the work that he and his colleagues have done and are doing in this regard. They are our watchdogs and they do a very good job. The video that he showed me of furniture, toys and clothing burning under controlled conditions convinced me that we have a long way to go in protecting the public from the introduction of unnecessary and potentially lethal hazards in their homes.

Last year in Dorset 12 people were killed by fire, and that pattern was repeated throughout the country. Some 700 people were killed and 8,000 were seriously injured in domestic fires in the United Kingdom. That happens almost every year. As recent events have sadly demonstrated, a normal, everyday situation can quickly develop into a fire-induced disaster.

I ask the Minister to err on the side of safety when making decisions on the fire regulations affecting household goods, clothing and toys. Our constituents would expect nothing else of us, and it would be typical of the Government's steady progress in this important sector of safety for the consumer.

8.31 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The debate opened with the tragic events at King's Cross—events that should never have been allowed to happen; on that the House is agreed. The inquiry into the disaster has opened today with a call for it to be conducted in a constructive spirit. I applaud that, and I am sure that the House will join me in so doing.

The Secretary of State is right to say that we must work together to increase health and safety at home, at work, in the environment and in public places. Nothing will be gained from prejudicing the coroner at the inquiry or laying blame before we are certain of the facts. It must be

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

said that the limited facts that have already become public knowledge—stations littered with rubbish and other fire hazards—are causing grave concern, not least since the first escalator fire was in 1985, and since then there have been three more.

Just as there is an obligation to conduct the inquiry constructively, so there is an obligation on London Regional Transport and the Government to respond to the eventual report frankly and fully and to implement all its recommendations, whatever they may be. I hope that the Minister will make that commitment, not only with regard to London Regional Transport but with regard to the report's implications for other matters. It is an obligation to the memory of the 31 people who so tragically died, to their families and friends and to millions of others who use the Underground system.

The motion raises an issue that does not only affect those who travel on the Underground; it impinges also on the safety of millions across the country—young and old, and those working in the countryside as well as those working in cities and factories.

Representing a rural constituency that is largely dependent on small businesses, agricultural work and so on, I am especially aware of the dangers that can lie in apparently idyllic countryside. For example, someone working in a manufacturing firm that employs fewer than 100 people runs a higher risk—perhaps 50 per cent. higher—of suffering a serious accident than someone working in a larger firm. Most people in Cornwall work in such environments, as do most people outside the major cities. There were 12,068 major injuries to employees in all industries, excluding agriculture, forestry and fishing and mining and quarrying, which is an increase of 17·9 per cent. on 1984. Fatalities increased by 13·4 per cent. The statistics show that the greatest risks lie precisely in those small firms. They are difficult to police and, sadly, are under-inspected by the inspectorate's overstretched work force.

The Government place great emphasis on cost-cutting and efficiency. The factories inspctorate has consistently argued that companies cut costs in the vital sector of training line managers to oversee shop floor health and safety. They increase the ignorance that the Secretary of State referred to as the most serious cause of accidents at work. As numbers increase, we find that ignorance is the greatest problem.

As the threat of unemployment has increased, as more people are in fear of losing their jobs, so employees have become reluctant to complain about the conditions in which they work, and point out the dangers that they face. That has increased as employees have become more afraid of the risk of losing their employment.

The reality of the matter is that the cut in the inspectorate of 20 per cent. in recent years has increasingly resulted in it being unable to fulfil its role. On average, it has been unable to visit workplaces more than once every 12 years. Small firms are practically ignored in those inspections.

Mr. Eves, who is Chief Inspector of Factories, said that he would like an extra 60 or 80 inspectors to ensure that the present work load was adequately done. Others have suggested that as many as 600 more would be more appropriate. I can offer no more than a muted welcome to the Minister's statement that the inspectorate will increase by 40 within the limits of its training facilities, especially as there has been a cut of 140 since 1979.

I hope that the Minister will make a commitment, at the very least, to increasing the facilities to train people. If there is a natural block, let us overcome it and ensure that it is not holding back the inspectorate. Mr. Eves said that a substantial number of smaller firms have little regard for their work force as human beings. I welcome the Secretary of State's intention to concentrate the inspectorate more on smaller firms, but that will need many more inspectors, which is why I would seek to increase training opportunities.

The responsibility for safety does not lie primarily with the employer but with the Government. However, the cost should not lie with the Government. The employer should be obliged to take these measures. A good employer will take these measures anyway, but the bad employer is the responsibility of the Government. The Government must lay down the rules within which those bad employers work. The Government must ensure that they are properly enforced.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): The hon. Gentleman says that the Government should police these safety measures. There are over 20 million people in employment in Britain. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that those people do not look after their own safety and comply with the regulations that are laid down by Government?

Mr. Taylor: Regrettably, there are not 20 million employers, but the Government must lay down the rules within which those companies work; in so doing it is the Government's responsibility to ensure that the rules are followed, and to do that we need an inspectorate that is adequate for the task.

I draw particular attention to the special needs of young people, of whom we heard a little earlier. That group is more at risk than any other in the work force, because they lack experience and training. They are often the ones who are likely to be in an industrial accident. In 1986, a TUC report announced 26 deaths on youth schemes—the youth opportunity programme and the youth training scheme. Since that report, there have been an additional seven deaths. Further, there have been maimings, which are so unnecessary and tragic; they remain a national disgrace.

A major injury is defined as a major fracture of a bone, amputation, loss of sight or 24-hour hospitalisation. In 1985-86 that figure reached an all-time high of 220 young people on YTS. Since then, the number has increased and now totals 355 since July 1986. Nationally, the level of injuries in industry stands at 60 per 100,000 members of the work force. On YTS, the figure works out at 82 per 100,000. The figure on YTS is one third higher than the figure for injuries in other industries.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Do you not understand that you cannot compare figures prior to 1 April 1986 with figures after that date, because the regulations changed on 1 April? Therefore, injuries that were previously classified as minor were classified as major after then. To compare major accidents prior to that date, as you did——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I must draw the attention of hon. Members to the

fact that they must speak in a formal manner through the Chair. This is a very informal Chamber, but our informality is a little excessive this evening.

Mr. Taylor: I repeat, since July 1986, 355 young people have suffered a major bone fracture, amputation, loss of sight or 24-hour hospitalisation. There is no excuse for that, and there should be no difference between the parties on that point. We should all be worried about that and resources should be devoted to tackling the problem.

The parents of one YTS trainee who died tragically received only £52 in compensation, and six other parents received just £78, according to a Youth Aid response to the MSC report last year. That is criminal. I do not believe that any hon. Member believes that that level of compensation should be accepted. Therefore, the fact that the MSC is taking the issue more seriously is to be welcomed. The recognition of trainees under health and safety legislation should be welcomed. However, there must be financial back-up for the inspectorate to ensure that action is taken in every case.

It is difficult in that context for the health and safety inspectorate to be really effective. In 1985-86, 198 work experience placements were reported closed on safety grounds, and 200 were not allowed to take part in the scheme. At that time, the 398 excluded workplaces represented just 0·25 per cent. of the total. Since then, 171 have been closed and 44 have been refused. The moves that the MSC has been making recently are to be welcomed particularly its new staff training initiatives, packages for YTS supervisors and the health and safety information packs. Sadly, the initiatives were too late for the 35 young people who died under the scheme. That is why strenuous efforts must be made to prevent more deaths and tragic injuries.

I do not yet have the confidence to say that more such injuries will not happen. I do not even have the confidence to claim that the level of danger to the YTS trainees will be reduced to the equivalent level of danger for others in industry. It is now widely accepted that accidents occur as a result of lack of training and lack of supervision. It is vital with any youth training scheme — because those trainees are more vulnerable to accidents — that qualified staff inspect every workplace to be used by trainees and keep inspecting them to ensure that standards are maintained.

The Secretary of State also referred to nuclear power stations. In a recent article in *The House Magazine*, the Secretary of State for Energy said:

"I know that some people ask whether nuclear power stations will be safe in the private sector. But one lesson we have all surely learnt from Chernobyl is that safety is not determined by who owns a power station."

Frankly, that hardly inspires confidence in the privatisation of the nuclear industry. No matter who owns the industry, the force of law and inspection should ensure that there are no dangers which can be avoided. In that case, the resources are not present to keep pace with the need.

We are all worried that in a privatised industry, if a report is made that a reactor may be less safe than was thought, the industrialist running the industry will want to continue to run that reactor to save the pennies and profits, when that reactor should really be closed down and inspected. That is not just a Liberal party concern. In a recent BBC poll, 70 per cent. of people said that they were concerned about the privatisation and public safety of the nuclear industry. No privatisation should take place without the proper safeguards. However, that should not simply apply to privatisation. No industry should operate without such safeguards. No industry should be free to endanger the employees or people living nearby.

Nuclear installations inspectorate trainees must train for three years before they are professionally qualified to have a nuclear power station under their control. That means that, if electricity privatisation is introduced during the lifetime of this Government, the build-up of qualified staff must start now. We have one third of the number of inspectors in West Germany. In February 1987, the Select Committee on Energy reported that at least seven of the present inspectors are being retained beyond the normal retirement age and that three more senior staff are due to retire this year. If we put that into the context of the fact that there are only 102 people employed, it becomes a truly frightening statistic. There were six new appointments in 1984, five in 1985 and six in 1986. The Select Committee on Energy described that situation as a "folly" which must be urgently rectified.

A summary produced by the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations published in June 1987 regretted the increase of inspectors by only 20 to 120. John Horlock, the committee chairman, said that at least 50 more were needed. He said:

"50 per cent. is the kind of increase the Government should be thinking about."

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Will the hon. Gentleman agree that, in addition to the inspectorate that he described, the nuclear industry is subject to the Health and Safety Executive inspectorate and the National Radiological Protection Board inspectorate?

Mr. Taylor: If the fears of the general public are not enough for the hon. Gentleman, surely he must consider the fears of the Select Committee on Energy and the fears of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations.

I have been speaking for some time now, and I want to make a final point about agricultural safety. This is an aspect of particular concern in my constituency. The agricultural inspectorate currently has a staff of 154. In response to a recent parliamentary question from the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), the Minister admitted:

"On 1 April 1979 there were 189 inspectors in Her Majesty's Agricultural Inspectorate. On 1 October 1987 the total was 154, of whom 142 were in the field."

The Minister's excuse for that was:

"In order to contain public sector manpower and spending, there have been staff reductions in the Health and Safety Executive, as in the Civil Service as a whole. In HSE this has been accompanied by improvements in efficiency with the use of sound financial management, strategic planning and careful targeting." — [*Official Report*, 6 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 937.]

In agriculture above all, the dangers to the individual who usually works alone, often many fields from the nearest road, are especially high. The machinery is not governed with the stringency applied to machinery in factories. It is horrifying to consider that, as yet, there is no legislation to enforce safety mechanisms to be automatically included with agricultural machinery. Were that legislation to be introduced, there would have to be an adequate inspectorate to implement it and to increase education and training.

[Mr. Taylor]

People working with agricultural machinery need more than an inspector calling round every few months. There must be immediate safety mechanisms. Truro school in my constituency has developed such a device, which could cut by half the number of people killed or maimed in farm accidents. It has developed a unique system that will switch off tractors and machinery called "Deadstop". It has received an award from BP and fired the interests of machinery manufacturers. However, it has received precious little response from the Government. It consists of touch-sensitive fibreglass pads fitted to easily reached points around the outside of a tractor or piece of agricultural machinery. Each pad is linked to the fuel pump and one touch will switch off the engine and set off a warning for help.

If anyone had seen, as I have seen, a plastic dummy caught up in a baling machine, they would understand the full horror of what could happen to a farm labourer or farmer who cannot reach out to stop the machine because his clothing is caught, who is working alone and has no hope of rescue. The system that I have described works and, at the very least, the Government should look urgently at legislation to enforce similar equipment that could save lives, if not that very equipment. Such devices should have been introduced 50 years ago.

It is appalling that there is still loss of life, when adequate research or support for initiatives such as I have described and the legislation necessary to ensure that they are used could be introduced. Such mechanisms have long been compulsory in industry, but not in agriculture.

The motion refers to funding for safety. The Government do not need to supply the funding to put that machinery in place, because that is the responsibility of the manufacturer and the employer. The Government and the Secretary of State are right about that. However, rules need to exist in agriculture, as in any other industry and so does the inspectorate to enforce them. That is what the Liberal party is calling for, and what I hope the House will call for.

8.50 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): There has been much comment from Opposition Members this evening, which seems to fall into the trap that has so often bedevilled their efforts to improve working conditions—the belief that legislation and regulations will cure everything. There has been the failure to recognise that it is far more important to change people's attitudes. One cannot change attitudes by legislation or regulations.

As important as the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is—I pay tribute, as did my right hon. Friend, to the fact that it was essentially a bipartisan piece of legislation—it cannot, on its own, create safety in the workplace because it must be accompanied by a change in attitude on the part of employer and employee. Employees must be much more aware of their responsibilities and obligations to their fellow workers. Of course, at the same time, employers must know and understand their legal and moral obligations. They must recognise the cost of not complying with safety regulations.

I do not mean the cost of a fine imposed by a court. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) reeled off all sorts of statistics on that subject. I mean the cost in down time, in lost work, of sick pay and of loss of reputation as an employer. That is important for employers who are hauled before the courts because of safety breaches. All those things have a cost when an accident occurs and, on the whole, employers increasingly understand that.

We have gone a long way and there are now all manner of regulations. I believe that the hon. Member for Oldham, West mentioned that there have been 28 since the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act came into force. In reply to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), I should say that a large number have been related to agriculture. There have been regulations about guards on machinery, protective clothing and ventilators, among other things. They all help, but one cannot legislate to stop the reckless or the ignorant from hurting themselves or others. That is why we must concentrate much more on individual attitudes and approaches to safety.

I should like to concentrate on the most important aspect, which is at the beginning of it all. I was pleased that the subject of the youth training scheme was raised by the hon. Member for Truro and by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields), who, I am sorry to note, has left the Chamber, having poured vitriol on virtually everything. I believe strongly, and hope, that YTS will become the normal route of entry into work for people leaving school at 16. It is right that that should be so. However, if that is to happen, we must look properly at the role of safety awareness in YTS.

Hon. Members have bandied about all sorts of accusations that are based on hearsay rather than on actual experience of what is happening in YTS. The two hon. Members who quoted figures had to band together the youth opportunities programme with the youth training scheme to get a figure of any sensational proportions. However, YOPS was totally dissimilar to YTS. The only similarity was that it applied to the same age group. There was no other similarity between the youth training scheme, which has a proper programme of training, and the YOP scheme, which was very much an in-fill way of keeping people off the dole. That is why the Government replaced it as soon as possible.

When a managing agent wishes to run a youth training scheme, he must submit a proposal to the Manpower Services Commission, in which he must make a statement of his proposals, saying what he will do for induction training. The induction programme must lay down the major aspects of training in safety and in first aid, which should always run alongside any safety training. Every work provider's premises must be inspected to ensure not only that there is safety equipment but safe practices that comply with all the legislation and regulations applying to such a place of work. I know of many would-be work providers who have been turned down at that stage because they did not comply or did not wish to comply.

All training providers, be it the managing agent or some other outside training contractor, such as a college of further education, or any private provider, must ensure not only that the premises have been inspected for safety, but that the training programme places sufficient emphasis on safety throughout the training period. Although many people, for all sorts of reasons, wish the youth training scheme to falter and fall, the reality is that it is not doing so. All the safety regulations are checked regularly by the Manpower Services Commission.

The House will be aware that, during the past 18 months, every managing agent has had to be monitored to

gain approved training organisation status. Such monitoring takes place over a three-month period. It is not a "here today, gone tomorrow" visit. The three-month monitoring programme seeks to ensure that managing agents comply with and fulfil the proposals that they set out when they were granted the scheme. Between January and March this year, as a member of an area manpower board, I saw dozens of reports from the MSC about a range of managing agents. Those reports placed great emphasis on safety throughout the scheme. The members of the board did the same when they discussed the reports.

That process is important and several managing agents were given only provisional status because there were safety problems. They must now upgrade to full training organisation status by next April if they are to continue running youth training schemes. Some have probably done so already. I know one managing agent whom the board rejected for several reasons. Sadly, when he appealed to the main MSC board, the appeal was upheld. I know a great deal about that case and I am sorry about the decision, because I think it was a serious mistake.

The matter does not stop there. For the past six months, managing agents have been inspected and monitored by the MSC's training standards advisory service. That is another step forward. It ensures that the quality of training provided by managing agents fulfils the targets and aims of the YTS. Again, close checks are made to ensure that safety is given its rightful emphasis.

This evening we have heard about alleged cuts in resources. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State refuted that completely and gave the up-to-date figures for expenditure. He did not include the figure which the MSC is spending on health and safety. In addition to the Health and Safety Executive's money, the MSC is spending some £4 million on health and safety in YTS alone. That is important.

The best way to begin to ensure that we move towards a well-trained, safety-conscious work force is to inculcate the safety ethos into fledgling workers. I do not want others to learn about safety as I did. I had worked for three weeks and was only 17 when I was close to a fatal accident. Another lad of my age who had just started work was fatally injured and I had to stand with him while he was dying and someone went for help. That was a farm accident, similar to those described by the hon. Member for Truro. It was a tragedy, but no legislation, no regulations and no equipment would have prevented it. It was caused by a lack of understanding about the way to proceed on a piece of work.

I will take no lectures from anybody about the need for safety at work, to be aware of problems and to ensure that young people at work understand the need for safety in every aspect of their work. I want everbody to understand their role and nobody to expect others to monitor safety for them, whether employee or employer. Everyone must ensure that everyone is working in a safe environment safely. The way ahead is to persuade others that they must use foresight in everything because often we use only hindsight.

At the end of the day it is not machinery, a lack of guards or anything like that which causes accidents; it is people. People can also prevent accidents, but only if they are aware of the responsibility that everyone carries for safety. Today's YTS is a major step towards ensuring that the work force of tomorrow understands its responsibilities and is safe in future.

9.2 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): In opening, the Secretary of State claimed that the Health and Safety Commission's funding was higher than that under the Labour Government, and he played around with some figures in an attempt to prove it. It is a pity that he is not present to answer this point, but I hope that a colleague will pass it on to him. If that were the case, how does he explain the drastic falling away of the inspectorate during the years of the Conservative Government? It has not reinstated employees who have died in service or retired, but has allowed the numbers to decrease. It has also failed to maintain the level of publications on health and safety advice and information which was carried out under the Labour Government. If it is spending less money on publications and employees, I wonder where the money is going.

The Secretary of State referred to the responsibility of individual employers and employees alike. Indeed, many Conservative Members have done so, as if the responsibility were equal. I can only imagine that they have not troubled to read the words of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. Section 2 states:

> "It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all of his employees."

Section 7 requires every employee to co-operate with the efforts of his employer to ensure his safety and that of other employees. That duty is not equally apportioned; it is not even-handed. The Health and Safety Commission has repeatedly told employers that they are primarily responsible for health and safety in the work place.

The Secretary of State also referred to the noise regulations that are still to come. However, he slid over the subject, and we should be keen to hear more about it. The code of practice on noise that has existed since 1969 has not yet been updated, although people in the medical profession have known for over 100 years that noise at work can make people permanently deaf or give them tinnitus. Only after immense pressure from the trade union movement—and, I suppose, shame that the country had fallen so far behind other advanced industrial nations in the noise regulations—are we at last catching up.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Would the hon. Lady care to reread section 7*(a)* of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 which provides that an employee has a duty

> "to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and of other persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work"?

Mrs. Fyfe: I agree with that. However, the primary responsibility, as the hon. Gentleman will have read elsewhere in that section, is to co-operate with his employer's efforts to ensure a safe workplace.

The Secretary of State referred to deaths from occupational illness, and had the effrontery to tell the House that it was impossible to give a figure for such deaths, because many go unreported. No employer should dare to fail to report the death or illness of any of his employees. I am talking about instances in which the person is in service; however, sadly, many such deaths arise because the person has contracted a fatal illness through his work, and has subsequently been made to leave that work—because, in this day and age, it is fair to sack someone when he is too unwell to work. Such people may die years or perhaps months later, by which

[Mrs. Fyfe]

time the firm has lost touch with its former employee. What a comment that is on the state of industrial relations in Britain today.

I noticed that the Secretary of State did not say a word about the role of safety representatives and safety committees. Was that a deliberate omission, or has the Secretary of State managed conveniently to forget people of whose existence he would rather not be aware?

Mr. Heffer: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend, because she is making an excellent speech. But is she aware that, in the construction industry, the growth of self-employment and lump labour means that the industry is no longer concerned with the safety regulations, as it ought to be, but only with making money? That has developed under the present Government. If workers who are not self-employed kick up too much of a row, they find themselves out on the streets, unemployed, because they have raised the question of safety.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank my hon. Friend for that point, with which I thoroughly agree. It is clear that the existence of lump labour creates far more hazardous working conditions, because safety officers will not be on site, as they would with a responsible firm. Certainly there will be no trade union safety representatives elected by the workers. That is why the lump area of the construction industry has such a bad safety record. If the Government were serious about safety in that industry, they would ensure that the lump system ended once and for all.

There has been much talk about the major hazardous industries, such as agriculture, mining, construction and the nuclear industry. Because of recent events, fire too has come to our attention. There is widespread disregard throughout industry and commerce of the hazards from fumes, dust, noise, overcrowding and bad housekeeping. No one needs training on how to keep clean, but firms cut costs by not keeping places clean.

The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was telling us on the radio this morning that health and safety should not be an issue between the two major parties and that the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 was common ground between them. In that case, will the Minister give us some assurances? Will he take steps to ensure that employers carry out their statutory duty to draw up a safety policy for the workplace, or will he leave that unenforced, as it is at present?

In my former occupation, I knew many safety representatives. Very few came from places where the employer was carrying out his statutory duty to have an up-to-date safety policy which was relevant to his workplace. Is the Minister aware that the Health and Safety Commission itself believes that the organisation of health and safety in the workplace must have equal importance with the organisation of production? If the Minister agrees, will he enforce that? If he does not agree, will he be honest enough to say so and stop trying to preach health and safety to people who care more about it than he ever will?

Will the Minister take action against employers who prevent elected trade union safety representatives from exercising their statutory right to attend recognised health and safety courses? That is another widespread abuse of the legislation under the Conservative Government. Employers know that they can get away with this, because the law will not be enforced. Employees are afraid to seek their statutory right of time off for health and safety training, because they know that their jobs will be on the line if they dare confront their employers.

Will the Minister insist that health and safety training and supervision in the workplace become a reality and that there is not the half-hearted approach typical in so many industries? Will he insist that the Health and Safety Executive guidance notes on dangerous substances are updated annually? Under the Labour Government there was an annual updating of safety levels for hundreds of hazardous and poisonous substances. In recent years, publication of updated levels has been irregular.

Will the Minister also ensure that leaflets which give information on dangerous substances, dangerous machinery and the handling of tools and equipment are more widely available? At present, they are very hard to come by. People must go to HMSO bookshops to get them. If we cared about health and safety, the leaflets would be in the ordinary bookshop in the high street. Often, they are out of print, and the only thing available is a highly technical publication. Although that may be necessary for some people, it is not meaningful for the ordinary man and woman who has to deal with those hazards.

It is essential that the lump labour practice is ended. I am pleased about the regulations which are coming into force on the wearing of safety helmets — that long-standing need is at last being met—but the regulations do not go far enough. When we walk around the streets, we see scaffolding which is a disgrace; it is obviously dangerous, yet people get away with not taking proper precautions.

The Government have been in power since 1979 and have had ample time to put right all the problems in health and safety, but they have not done so. Therefore, I do not believe that there is an equal approach by both sides of the House to the question. Only a Labour Government will impose proper health and safety standards, and I look forward to that day.

9.13 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): When there is an Opposition day, it is sad that it looks like an Opposition day off. Time and again the Opposition select interesting subjects for debate, but when the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who made a good contribution, was speaking, only between four and nine of his hon. Friends were listening to him. I am glad that 10 Opposition Members are now in the Chamber. The number went to double figures for the first time about two minutes ago.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Does the hon. Member agree that more Opposition than Government Members are in the Chamber?

Mr. Bruce: Certainly I would. Unfortunately, they have had to listen to some of the speeches of Opposition Members.

Hundreds of people are killed and thousands of people are injured every year, and the subject should be debated by hon. Members. However, the Labour party has brought forward this motion because, all of a sudden, Labour Members have found a statistic with which they thought they could beat the Government. They have seen the number of injuries rise at an alarming level. This has

been caused because the Government are concerned to ensure that all serious injuries are pulled into the net. Last year the Government, rightly, increased the categories which would be covered to include fractures of the wrists and ankles and amputations of digits—serious injuries which should be considered seriously.

We have heard this evening that the Government have increased the budget by £6·7 million and have approved the employment of another 55 inspectors and 35 new support staff. More inspectors should be working in the factories and in the field, doing the necessary work. At the moment we have roughly five staff per constituency, which is probably an adequate number, but only one and a half of those are doing inspections. I hope that that number can be increased and that more advice can be given to people.

I am pleased to hear that the number of inspectors in the nuclear industry has been increased. Winfrith is in my constituency. It is an atomic research establishment as well as a generating station. I have had many conversations with engineers and staff of that establishment and they tell me that at the moment they feel—I appreciate that great strides have been taken to increase the number of staff —that not enough inspectors are fully trained to do their many tasks, so I welcome the news that the number of inspectors will be increased to 120.

We have talked a great deal about changing attitudes, which is very important. I remember, as a work study engineer, many times having been brought in to look at safety at work. I should like to give an example of a new managing director arriving at the company I had recently joined. We were looking at the routing of profiles on the outside of printed circuit boards, which caused a great deal of noise, dust and danger to the operators. After much consultation, many thousands of pounds were spent to bring the safety devices up to scratch, to get rid of the dust and to give people protection and ear defenders.

Only about a week after all the work had been done by the company, putting the changes into place, the staff went to management and said, "We know that it is all noisy, dirty and everything else, but why don't you just give us another fiver a week and we will go back to the old system we had before?" We have had to hammer it into people that safety is the responsibility of employees as well as of employers.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman referred to circuit boards. I wonder whether he would agree with me that the problems sometimes lie with the employers. Recently an inspector found the case of a 16-year-old boy drilling circuit boards who was provided with a tube from his mouth to the open window so that he would not be overcome by the fumes in the factory.

Mr. Bruce: It is interesting to hear from the hon. Gentleman. The matter to which he referred sounds like an item in an article that I also read. The person was drilling holes in metal, and the fumes were from a diesel generator. I do not know whether we have the same story in mind, but it seems to be rather strange. However, I agree that any such practices are wrong.

I was about to say that management must never abdicate the responsibility constantly to check on what employees are doing. Employees become blasé. They may deal with dangerous substances. Senior management in any industry must agree that they have a primary responsibility.

Mr. Heffer: The latest report of the Health and Safety Commission points out that a young roofing operator was killed when he fell through fragile asbestos sheeting while replacing some skylights. No crawling boards were provided. Who is responsible for providing crawling boards? It is not the operative but the employer. No doubt, if the lad had asked for crawling boards, he would have been told to do the job or be sacked. That is the truth.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He mentioned an example and then promptly decided that the employee in question had asked for crawling boards—the report does not state that—and that they were not available to him.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman should read it.

Mr. Bruce: Clearly the employer should supply the necessary crawling boards. Of course that is correct. I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. But it is also clearly the employee's responsibility, before embarking on a hazardous job, to look after his own safety. The hon. Gentleman knows that, in a normal workplace, many willing employees rush off and do jobs without the necessary safety devices being in place.

The building industry has been mentioned. Clearly many things need to be done. The health and safety inspectorate has spent considerable time on blitzing building sites. There is a great deal of ignorance through a lack of training of building employees. There is often a great deal of bravado. A building labourer will boast about how much he can carry and how he can run up and down scaffolding without the necessary safety procedures being observed. We must change employees' and employers' attitudes. The same applies to factory labourers.

I was pleased to see in the Strangers' Gallery one of my constituents who works for BP. BP is a multinational company that spends an enormous amount of time and trouble training its staff. It has an excellent safety record in a hazardous industry.

We must pay more attention to machinery design and look for intrinsically safe devices and processes. It is often far too late for employers to put add-on guards on machinery that is already in place. Add-on guards often cause accidents rather than prevent them. The ingenuity of designers is always outclassed by the ingenuity of an operator who wants to get through a system. The triple valve interlock tends to be defeated by the triple valve override that a clever operator has created. Management must ensure that sensible devices are put in place and that the interests of their employees are constantly at the forefront.

Workplaces need safety groups, and safety groups must work with management. People often talk about committees. They sit in offices and, for hours on end, discuss what safety is all about. They would be much better advised to have a safety group to walk around the factory looking at a different part each week. Such a group could include people from outside — perhaps even someone's mum—who could walk round and look at the factory through new eyes and say, "Why are you doing that? Isn't it dangerous?". That would be enough to make people think.

We can rely upon employees to ensure that the Health and Safety Executive is advised of dangerous practices in factories. It is wrong to say that the fear of being dismissed

[Mr. Bruce]

prevents employees from reporting such practices. The Health and Safety Executive takes anonymous tip-offs and any employee who feels that he is not being properly looked after should make a proper report to the Health and Safety Executive. All of us should ensure that we highlight accidents that have occurred. I have recently gone round all my friends showing them two fingers, like this—I am not being rude to Opposition Members—because I ripped my fingers open on a staple when opening an envelope. Too often, people say, "It will not happen to me." We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) how he had to stand and watch someone die after an industrial accident. The fact that such accidents occur needs to be highlighted all the time.

Of course the Government have a necessary role in making sensible regulations and we have to ensure that they are enforced. However, education and the responsibility of the individual are very important. Industry must rededicate itself to real improvements and prove that it is capable of putting its own house in order, but for employees their lives are really in their hands.

9.26 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Throughout the debate there have been many more Labour Members than Conservative Members present. For the most part, the Conservative Benches have been deserted, whereas the repeated interventions made by my hon. Friends have demonstrated their interest in the matter and the time and attention that they have devoted to it.

It is interesting how, when Conservative Members are in trouble, they always want to snuggle up to consensus and say, "There is not a division between us." Let us have a look at the divisions. Year in, year out, more days have been lost in industrial injury than in strike action—except in very special years. In 1980, which was a bad year for industrial stoppages, in spite of the Conservatives' new broom, 11 million days were lost through industrial stoppages and 13·1 million in industrial injury. In 1981, 4 million days were lost in strike action and 10·9 million in industrial injury. In 1982, 5 million days were lost through strike action and 10·8 million—double the number—in industrial injury. In 1983, 3·7 million days were lost in strike action and 9·5 million—three times the figure—in industrial injury.

The Government have introduced Act after Act to legislate against the trade unions, although industrial injury is a serious problem and more days are lost through it. In spite of that, many cuts have been made in health and safety. Incidentally, the Government no longer require notification of the loss of three or more days through industrial injury. The fact that they no longer require such notification, which gave them a great deal of information about industrial injury, shows their lack of care.

The Government have spoken about increased resources for the factories inspectorate. The safety of factories is monitored by that inspectorate. In 1979, in the general and specialist categories, there were 951 inspectors. In 1987 there were 823 inspectors. On my arithmetic, that is reduction of 128. Therefore, 128 fewer people are going round monitoring the safety standards in the factories. Given the fact that the total number of inspectors is less than 1,000, that is a significant reduction and affects the standard of protection to which workers are entitled.

When special accidents occur, such as accidents at fun fairs, they receive a great deal of publicity. Ministers trot off to the television cameras and say that they are carefully looking after the situation. When people are killed at swimming pools, with their new swirls and multi-tubular constructions, resources are immediately diverted from the Health and Safety Executive—it can ill afford to lose those resources—to produce an inquiry and report. However, resources are not available to carry out the fundamental requirements of such a report because of the pressures exerted on such resources.

For the past two years, a consultative document regarding draft guidelines for the standard of supervision in swimming pools has been in the process of production and distribution. How long will that document take? When will the process be completed? Will we have yet another crop of accidents this summer, with Ministers going off, once again, to the media to say how much they care?

When will we have some action regarding accidents caused through lifting heavy weights? Those accidents cause thousands of people severe or minor injury each year—either way it is extremely uncomfortable for those people. The legislation is antique and the Secretary of State has said that he is concerned about that. When will they alter the Agricultural (Lifting of Heavy Weights) Regulations that place a limit of 175 lbs on a weight to be lifted? When will the textile regulations be altered that place a limit of 120 lbs on a weight to be lifted by an adult worker? When will the regulations be altered with regard to factory workers who are allowed to lift a "reasonably heavy load"? When will such legislation be clarified, considering the fact that such lifting causes so much injury and loss of time at work?

The Secretary of State spoke complacently about asbestos. However, after I had intervened, he said that there were some problems, but no new ones. The reason why this Tory Government took action on asbestos was not because of the pressure from workers or union representations, such as that of Transport and General Workers Union and the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union—that union has done excellent work on this matter. It was the result of a television programme entitled, "Alice, a Fight for Life." That programme showed how a woman had contracted mesotheliosis. Indeed, she virtually died on the programme.

The Government had been in possession of the Simpson committee recommendations for three years, but had done nothing. Belatedly, they introduced a licensing system for asbestos strippers. Can the Secretary of State tell us whether he will make representations to the Secretary of State for the Environment to provide grants for the authorities to cover the cost for removing the asbestos that is being found? The removal of this dangerous substance is placing a great burden on local authorities.

Can the Secretary of State also tell us when the present haphazard system by which anyone can pay £50 for a licence to kill will be replaced? A system should be introduced whereby only qualified and trained operators are allowed to obtain a licence.

Is the Secretary of State aware that the unions and employers have signed an agreement to improve conditions and have sent a joint recommendation to the Health and Safety Commission on how licensing regulations may be turned into an effective control system? Under the present system virtually anyone can get a licence to carry out this highly dangerous job. Both the unions and the employers want more inspectors and a totting-up system for offences that would lead to the revocation of a licence.

They want new rights for safety representatives and evidence of competence — trained operators and supervisors — before a licence is granted. That is very typical of the attitude of the trade unions and of some employers in these dangerous occupations. They have made representations. When he replies to the debate, the Secretary of State can tell us whether these representations will have any effect in improving the safety standards for those who work in that very dangerous industry.

There is another hon. Member who wants a few extra minutes. I hope that you notice, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to give him one or two minutes by concluding now. This is because I think we should maintain a balance in the House. There have been many and varied contributions from Opposition Members. It is our debate, and there have been many interjections which demonstrate the wide range of interest that exists in the labour movement.

Contrary to the hypocritical and complacent attitude of hon. Members on the Government Benches, it is the workers who suffer the slings and arrows of industrial injury. It is they who have to have the days off work and it is they who are injured. Many workers can testify that if they raise the question of safety, if they raise the question of improved conduct by the employer, they are threatened with the sack and are often given it.

Mr. Terry Fields: Is my hon. Friend not aware that British Rail workers, or London Regional Transport workers at King's Cross station, were threatened with dismissal for giving out leaflets to the general public on the lack of safety measures at that station?

Mr. Cryer: That is right. That attitude is enshrined in the phrase, "Let management manage." That is the sort of attitude that the Tory Government want to support on every conceivable occasion. Workers are not supposed to have rights or to excercise those rights because it challenges the executive suite which gives so much money and support to the Conservative party.

I conclude, therefore, by stressing the great importance of this subject. We must say again and again that we lose more days each year through industrial injury than through strike action. We need better and tighter legislation from the Government to prevent loss of life and industrial injury, not the nasty, vicious vendetta that they are carrying out against the trade union movement today.

9.37 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for giving me one or two moments in which to make a contribution to this debate. His attitude is much appreciated.

Bearing in mind the remarks of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and comments from other hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, I hope that we are not trying to argue that "Socialism is safety". I would, with respect, remind Opposition Members that one of the largest and most horrible industrial accidents occurred in Chernobyl, and I do not see too many Conservatives there.

I am interested in how accidents actually happen in the workplace, because in my last place of business I was responsible for trying to develop an attitude in my company on the subject of safety. I would like to pay a tribute to the role of the trade unions in that work. As someone who was not at the outset fully trained in that sphere, I was given much good advice, particularly from the stewards and regional officials of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. The trade unions have an important contribution to make to discussions on safety practices.

This contribution highlights the essential element which has come out of the debate, that safety is a contract. It is not just a matter of the words of the safety statement on the notice board; it is what happens on the factory floor every day of the week. It is the responsibility of the employee, together with the employer, to ensure good safe practices and working conditions.

I found no difficulty in getting a member of the Health and Safety Commission to come and give me some advice on good practice. The service is available, and someone came quickly to carry out an inspection. But no amount of inspection, had that person come every day after the initial visit, would have ensured safe working conditions in the packing and produce industry that I worked in. It was down to the management's attitude and the way in which the management followed up those recommendations — and likewise the response that we got from the work force. Safety is about the essential operation of that partnership.

Many Labour Members have highlighted safety problems in small companies, and our larger companies could also contribute towards their safety. When the Secretary of State meets directors and senior personnel of large companies which have a partnership relationship with their smaller suppliers, he should urge them to offer their expertise in safety to the smaller companies. Large companies can bring to bear all the information and awareness which hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned during the debate and give it to the small companies for their use. Such a partnership would be a useful way forward.

It is particularly sad that no regulation that I know of says that no piece of factory machinery can be imported into Britain unless it complies with our safety regulations. That would be an important development.

In my closing minutes, let me pay tribute to the nuclear industry's safety record. British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. at Springfield in my constituency has a high safety record. One aspect of the nuclear industry's approach to safety that I would commend above all to British industry is its regular challenge of the assumption that something which today is considered to be safe will always be so. It is no use assuming that because something is safe once, it cannot be improved upon. Challenging assumptions is an active safety policy. The nuclear industry has an excellent safety record, with a low number of accidents and persons killed at work. The only death at Sellafield in 1986 was the result of a motor vehicle accident on the site. The nuclear industry can teach us a great deal about safety, and I applaud the Government's work in that area.

9.41 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I am glad that the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) had the opportunity to contribute to the debate. It is fair to say that everyone who wished to speak has done so. I was particularly glad to hear the hon. Gentleman pay tribute to the work of trade unions in the important area of health and safety, and I trust that that is common ground between us.

The importance that the House attaches to this issue has been clear from remarks this evening. Thousands of people every year die or suffer from accidents or diseases. Sometimes those occur in highly publicised incidents, but most are individual cases which are only mentioned by the local press, and that is as far as the matter goes.

Accidents and diseases have been rising in many areas at a disturbing rate. We welcome the reduction in the number of fatalities, to which the Minister referred, but I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will accept that the most objective way of looking at the issue is to look at the combined fatal and serious injury rate —the number of incidents per 100,000 of employees— over a period.

In the Health and Safety Commission's report for the year ended 31 March 1986, the chairman states:

"The fatal and major incidents rates for 1985 are greater than for 1981 by 31 per cent. in manufacturing industry as a whole; by 45 per cent. in construction and by 34 per cent. in agriculture."

When the Secretary of State refers to an evening out of injury rates, let us not forget that we are talking about a flattening out at a level which has increased sharply in many industries over that period and which is unacceptably high.

We were unconvinced by the Minister's reference to the Government's funding of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive. Yes, there is a small increase in real terms in the figures that he quoted, as judged by the increase in prices throughout the economy, but there are two major reasons why that argument will not wash and both were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) when he opened the debate.

First, as with the Health Service, the internal costs incurred by the Health and Safety Executive have risen more rapidly than inflation. Secondly, and crucially, there has been an enormous expansion of the areas which the Health and Safety Executive and Commission have had to cover since the 1974 Act. I do not have time to go over all of them. There are 28 new sets of regulations; and in its memorandum to the Select Committee on Employment earlier this year, the Health and Safety Executive referred to seven major expanding areas.

One must mention the importance of the nuclear installations inspectorate after Chernobyl, and the important new responsibilities for gas that the executive has acquired. The HSE has responsibility for every gas appliance in our homes. For these reasons, we are right to assert that the resources that have been provided for the Health and Safety Executive by this Government have been utterly inadequate, and the small increase that has been announced falls a long way short of what is needed.

Total staff numbers in 1979 were 4,200: now they are 3,600, in spite of the increased responsibilities. There will be still fewer staff when the increases that the Secretary of State has announced are implemented. The factories inspectorate had 951 inspectors in 1971; the latest available figures show that it has 823 now. The number of workplaces has risen since 1980 from 300,000 to 400,000. So we must judge the small increases that the Government belatedly announced earlier this year against the background of expanded areas of obligation for the Health and Safety Executive, and the number of inspectors who are available to carry out the work.

If the Government are interested in considering what action should be taken, I strongly commend to them the major TUC statement that was carried at this year's congress, entitled "Health and Safety at Work: The Way Forward". I hope that Ministers will carefully study the large number of recommendations contained in that important statement.

In view of the importance attached to occupational health, why are the Government not prepared to ratify and implement convention 161 on occupational health services? When will the Government bring forward comprehensive safety proposals for our young people on youth training schemes? Several hon. Members have rightly referred to the tragic incident at King's Cross. Is it not revealing that London Regional Transport is not going ahead with planned cuts in cleaning services? We need to know why the recommendations in the written report on the Oxford Circus station fire have not been implemented.

Whatever the outcome of the inquiry, I hope that the whole House accepts that there can be no question of responsibility being foisted on some junior manager. The board of London Regional Transport and the Government must accept responsibility for the consequences of their policy.

The change in policy announced by London Regional Transport has been reflected in changes in policy that have been made by British Rail. I mention briefly its plan to implement one-person operation on the Drayton Park to Moorgate line — a policy that was resisted by the National Union of Railwaymen. That has been mentioned in our debates on the Employment Bill. Although the NUR resisted the plan, it was only as a result of the King's Cross accident that British Rail announced that it was not going ahead with one-person operation. We should acknowledge the important role of the trade union in this area. The safety of staff and passengers is part of the NUR's constitution.

The Opposition are in no doubt that the Government's drive for profit on London Regional Transport and British Rail has been at the expense of safety standards. It is not good enough for the Prime Minister to congratulate the emergency services on their bravery if the Government do not allocate the resources that they need to do the job. There is no doubt that the deregulation of bus services is already threatening safety standards on many of them, and while Conservative Members may think that privatisation of the electricity industry will be a great achievement, I assure them that the vast majority of the British people are terrified by the prospect of nuclear power stations being run for private profit. The cuts in local government are getting deeper and deeper. Hon. Members have spoken about the effect of those cuts on safety provision and on the health and safety responsibilities of local authorities. How much more suffering do we need to have before the Government give health and safety the priority that the British people demand?

9.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): It is inevitable that in the time available to me I shall not be able to reply to all the points that were made by hon. Members. If what I and my right hon. Friend have said does not answer specific points made by hon. Members, we shall try to come back to them on those points.

The Opposition ask whether the Government are playing their part. On the evidence that we have heard in the debate, the answer is that the Government have most certainly played their part. It is necessary to address one or two points which emphasise that. The first is that there has been a great deal of talk in the debate that the Government have been responsible for financial cuts in the Health and Safety Commission's financial provision. Let us get it on the record once and for all that there have been no cuts whatever of that nature. There is no question of financial cuts in the HSC provision.

We appreciate that the HSC has had cuts in the sense that it has had extra obligations imposed upon it. Inevitably, it found itself stretched, but that cannot be laid at the Government's door. The reason for it is that, inevitably, the Government are trying to do more than has ever been done before in the field of safety in the work-place. That inevitably imposes strains. It was said that cuts have taken place, but we must emphasise that we have increased the financial provision to the Health and Safety Commission. It has been topped up twice in this year's financial provision and we have heard that there will be an increase of more than £6·7 million next year.

The Opposition have tried to say that that is insufficient and that, even with provision of that sort, the Health and Safety Commission will not be able to fulfil its tasks. The Opposition may take that view, but it is certainly not the view taken by the chairman of the commission. He has made it abundantly clear that these increased payments, and particularly the £6·7 million to be provided next year, will not only mean that the HSC will be able to discharge its statutory duties, but that it will be able to fund the 50 extra inspectors and the 10 specialist inspectors as well. That provision shows that the commission will be able to fulfil its statutory duties and will also be able to increase the number of inspectors in the way in which my right hon. Friend said.

I shall now say something about taking on inspectors. From listening to the Opposition, one would think that a direct causal link had been established between the number of inspectors and the number of accidents. In some ways, it would be nice if that were the position, but it is not that simple. There is no proven direct link between the number of accidents and the number of inspectors. Certainly, it is obvious that there must be an indirect connection, and because it is there the Government have said that the number of inspectors will be increased. It is too simplistic to say that, if we increase the number of inspectors, there will be an automatic decrease in the number of industrial accidents. If it were that easy——

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has drifted in and out of this debate. In the short time available to me, I want to deal with some of the more substantial points. The effect that inspectors have is like a catalyst.

Mr. Heffer: Arrogant little basket.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heffer: I said "basket".

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may not be unparliamentary, but it is pretty nasty.

Mr. Heffer: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I said "a basket". If the Minister does not like it, that is too bad, but I said "basket" and nothing else.

Mr. Nicholls: It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman has dined well this evening, and we should congratulate him on that.

I shall deal with some of the specific points that have been made. One of the first contributions came from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields). The hon. Gentleman's speech was remarkably tasteless, even by the standards of Militant. He tried to say that the Government have a completely callous and complacent attitude towards the safety of youth trainees. The hon. Gentleman suggested that there was carnage among young people. He expressed his contempt for the policies of the last Labour Administration and for this Government, and tried to suggest that there were many deaths on YTS.

The hon. Gentleman will be pleased that I am able to correct him on that assertion. Since 1983, about 1.6 million people have been on YTS. The figures for fatalities are that in 1983 there were three deaths; in 1984 there were four death; in 1985 there were four deaths; and in 1986 there were seven deaths. Every one of those deaths was a tragedy for the people involved. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that that was because of callousness by the Government is twisting the truth even more than the hon. Gentleman would want.

There is no evidence that people who are on YTS are any more at risk than any other young people in training. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said that the MSC had taken swift action where placements were considered to be dangerous. In 1985-86, 403 placements were closed and 320 were refused.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar) *rose*——

Mr. Nicholls: I do not have time to give way to the hon. Lady.

That is the measure of the attitude that the Government have adopted. It is remarkable that the hon. Member for Broadgreen saw fit to make such remarks, and even thought that he had to lace his speech with references to the motives of those who attend Prayers at the beginning of a parliamentary session. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not notice, but his speech was so tasteless that even Labour Members were squirming with embarrassment.

Comment was made about the role that small firms played in accidents. Obviously, a firm starting up may not have the necessary expertise in health and safety. That is a matter of which the inspectorate is aware. Some 80 per cent. of the factories inspectorate's visits are to small firms. In the current year, it will be increasing by 5 per cent. the amount of time that it spends seeking out new companies.

The point that must be made time and time again is that, for the most part, when inspections take place it is obvious that employers are not ignoring health and safety requirements out of malice, but that they need information about how to conduct themselves. Those who say that there is something inherently dangerous about small firms

[Mr. Nicholls]

are wrong. One could get rid of accidents in the workplace by not having any employment. Obviously, that is not a sensible attitude.

A number of hon. Members, in particular the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang)——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 265.

Division No. 92] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinc'liffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John

Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions or Amendments) and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House noting the Government's policy for replacing outmoded legislation with a new regime which maintains or improves health and safety standards tailored to modern needs, recognises that the prime responsibility for the reduction of accidents to workers lies with the employers, employees and others at the workplace; acknowledges the regulatory and other work of the Health and Safety Commission; and welcomes the Government's support for the Health and Safety Commission's efforts in the field of health and safety at work and in the community.

Select Committees

10.16 pm

Sir Marcus Fox (Shipley): I beg to move,

That Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Calum A. Macdonald, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Paul Marland, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Jerry Wiggin and Mrs. Ann Winterton be members of the Agriculture Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and the amendment to the motion on the Defence Committee—

That Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Bruce George, Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Jonathan Sayeed, Mr. Neil Thorne and Mr. John Wilkinson be members of the Defence Committee—

in the name of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). It may be helpful to the House if I say that the debate will last for one and a half hours. It is a broad debate on Select Committees. At the end of one and a half hours I shall put the Question on the amendments that I have selected and the motions.

Sir Marcus Fox: There is a saying that there is nothing new in the world; it has all happened before. Let me tell new Members of the House that, when the Select Committees were first set up in 1979, 22 weeks elapsed before they sat. In 1983, after the general election, 26 weeks went by. In 1987, there has been an interval of 24 weeks. I suppose that one of the penalties of holding a general election in the summer is that the long summer recess intervenes and stretches the period out. If we ignore that, there is an average delay of some three months.

When we consider that Select Committees are set up for the whole Parliament—for some four and a half years—it is not surprising that there should be so much interest in the subject. Perhaps, as I hope, that denotes an acceptance that the Committees do an excellent job. The interest that is created is shown by the number of hon. Members applying to be members of the Committees, which increases every time that we have the task of setting them up.

Mr. Michael Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why there is nothing on the Order Paper about the Scottish Select Committee? He has mentioned the time that it takes to set up the Committees. If there is no mention of the Scottish Select Committee and its make-up tonight, that means that the process will take longer, and the Committee will have less time to consider important matters that are crucial to Scotland and the Scottish people.

Sir Marcus Fox: I believe that the hon. Gentleman would have been one of the first to complain if the Scottish Select Committee had been included with the 13 Committees on the Order Paper. He would not have considered that a debate lasting one and a half hours would have been sufficient for Scottish Members to express their concern at the reduction in the number of hon. Members on that Committee, and on a number of other issues that have come up in the meantime.

I assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that as soon as we can resolve the present impasse — indeed, if we cannot—you, Mr. Speaker, will be informed, and there will be a debate so that the whole House can decide the issue.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Has my hon. Friend noticed that the total number of names appearing for membership of the Home Affairs and Transport Select Committees is 10, whereas for all the others 11 names appear? Can he explain that discrepancy, and will he emphasise that it is not due to a lack of volunteers? I volunteered to be a member of the Transport Select Committee, but I have searched in vain for my name.

Sir Marcus Fox: May I reassure my hon. Friend that there is still hope for him? The reason those two vacancies were left is simply that out of a distribution of 83 places for Conservatives, 50 for Labour Members and 10 for the minor parties overall for the 13 Committees, the total numbers appointed are 81 Conservatives, leaving two vacancies; 52 Labour Members, which means that they have two extra; and eight instead of 10 members of the minor parties. We have left the two vacancies in the hope that our reasonableness will encourage those in the minor parties who are not satisfied with our appointments on Defence and Agriculture to take the places on Transport and Home Affairs on the basis that it is impossible to guarantee anyone's first choice. If that applies to the two major parties, it surely must be right for the minor parties.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food vote covers the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland? Therefore, the Agriculture Committee is very important to Northern Ireland Members. Northern Ireland had two Members on the Committee in the last Parliament. This time no Unionist has been selected, although a Member of the SDLP is to be on the Committee.

Sir Marcus Fox: The hon. Gentleman is right. The extra place last time came by courtesy of the Labour party which was prepared to give up a place to a minor party. That was not the case this time. I am sorry that there is nothing further we can do in that situation.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in the appointment of Committees which apply to Scotland or Wales there should be a different definition as there is for Grand Committees? Would it not be more appropriate if he were to take account of the voting patterns of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland when appointing the various Committees?

Sir Marcus Fox: I refer the hon. Lady to the debate which took place when the Select Committees were set up. The Committee of Selection was commissioned to take account of the balance in the United Kingdom and not to consider individual parts of the United Kingdom.

My position as Chairman of the Committee of Selection is unique in that I am popular and unpopular at the same time. It is important to realise that on Standing Committees, Statutory Instruments Committees and private Bill Committees our authority is clear. We have the power to appoint Members to those Committees. Some volunteers write in, there is an element of conscription and there is also work sharing. There are invisible Members who seek to avoid Committees, but I see it as part of the

work of the Committee of Selection to make sure that the work is shared as fairly as possible. The nomination of the Committees that I have just described is not subject to the scrutiny of or amendment by the House. In other words, the Committee of Selection has the final say.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Member said that the Committee was under an obligation to take cognisance of the United Kingdom writs. Does he recognise that two hon. Members dropped off from 80 per cent. is much less than two dropped off from 17 per cent.?

Sir Marcus Fox: The system is not quite as the hon. Gentleman described it. The Clerks, who are infallible, have a slide rule and we mark up or down to two decimal places, depending on whether it is above or below ·5. We cannot go any further than that. I am sorry to disabuse the hon. Member.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman may have misunderstood my point. He said that 80 seats were allocated to the Conservatives, leaving two to be filled, whereas two Northern Ireland Members have been left out of the four or five seats which would be allocated to them.

Sir Marcus Fox: It is a complicated question. The minority parties have 44 Members, ranging from one to 17, and four parties have three Members—the Scottish National party, Plaid Cymru, the Democratic Unionists and the Social Democratic Labour party. Each party has been allocated 0·68 of a place. If we work that out, those four minority parties have only three places between them. For the life of me, I cannot extend that beyond three places between the four parties of equal strength. I have tried to illustrate that we are prepared to leave a place on the Committees to allow one person from each of those parties to have a place.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In the last Parliament it was a little difficult, to say the least, to set up these sloppy consensus Select Committees so that they could gallivant around the world, running out of money after nine months. The thing that intrigues me is how the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has managed on this occasion to decide what to do with the SDP, since it has a provisional and an official wing of the party. How has he managed to allocate places between the two warring factions?

Sir Marcus Fox: I do not know much about sloppiness and travelling around the world, but I have had enough trouble with the existing minority parties without pursuing it any further. I move on to the 14 departmental committees.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): As the hon. Member has told the House of his difficulty because of the number of minority parties, many of them having three Members, could he tell the House how he came to select only the SDLP Member out of the Ulster Members to sit on the very important Agriculture Committee?

Sir Marcus Fox: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I will explain in a little detail the secret machinations that go on when the Select Committee meets every Wednesday. Hon. Members must remember that the House has given the Select Committee far fewer powers than the Standing Committees and other Committees I have described. We do not nominate; we recommend. It is for the House tonight to debate and amend the motions, if it thinks fit, and we will go along with that.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that before 1979 members of Select Committees were nominated by the House on a motion tabled by a Government Whip, after consultation with other political parties and interested Members; in other words—a phrase he loves—through the usual channels. I know that that is anathema to my hon. Friend. The Public Accounts Committee and House of Commons (Services) Committee members are still nominated in that way, as he well knows, but he must draw a distinction between those Committees and the Committees for which the Committee of Selection has responsibility. My hon. Friend is in danger of shooting the wrong fox.

I shall describe how the Committee works. Select Committees are a nightmare. The members are volunteers. Without any doubt, there is a surplus of possible members. It is impossible to give people their first choice. Many excellent colleagues are listed on the Order Paper. There may be more brilliant ones who have not been successful this time. We have to strike a balance between acknowledging the experience of certain hon. Members and giving other colleagues an opportunity to serve. That is not easy. I discuss such matters and take advice—some is asked for and some is freely given. I have been known to consult the Whips. To my knowledge, they are not outcasts in this place. When we make our recommendations, the choice rests absolutely with my four colleagues and myself. We represent the Government party on the Committee and we take full responsibility for our nominations. No criterion has ever been given to us, either by the House or by the Procedure Committee. It would be of assistance if it did guide us—it is always free to do so.

In November 1979, my predecessor, Sir Philip Holland said, as recorded in "Erskine May"—that

"the Committee enjoyed full discretion and was under no obligation to consult, to take advice or to indicate any criteria of choice."

It followed, therefore, that the Committee was procedurally free to choose whom it liked on whatever basis it thought applicable, subject to the eventual verdict of the House as a whole.

In practice, we follow three broad principles. First, the Government shall have a majority on each Select Committee. Secondly the overall number of members from each party nominated to the Select Committees should reflect the parties' balance in the House as a whole. Thirdly, no Minister, Whip, parliamentary private secretary or principal Opposition spokesman should be nominated. The second criterion gives us the most difficulty.

The figures worked out, as I have said, to two decimal places. I have dealt with the four minor parties which have three places on the Committees. We cannot give people their first choice.

By convention, members of the two main parties on the Committee decide which names shall go forward on behalf of their party. The names are put before the whole Committee for its approval. There are eight other parties with from one to 17 members. The minor parties negotiate among themselves who shall receive nominations. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) represents the Liberal party's interests. He is a remarkable man. It is no wonder that, when Liberal Members cannot agree, he asks the Committee to take a decision. It is not

[Sir Marcus Fox]

easy to do so, but, in good faith, we must decide between the two or three names that are put to us. Again, it is subject to the decision of the whole House.

I gather that the debate may range wider than I have mentioned. It may include the chairmanship of Committees. The Committee of Selection has never concerned itself with deciding who shall be chairmen. It is no part of our duty to do so. Committee members would take exception if anyone other than themselves were to take on that responsibility.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Although, with the utmost good faith, I accept my hon. Friend's statement that the Committee of Selection does not interfere, surely he will not suggest that there is no interference by the two Whips' Offices in the selection of chairmen. That is an established fact, and it has been so since 1979.

Sir Marcus Fox: My hon. Friend obviously did not listen very carefully to what I said. I said that the Committee of Selection takes no part in deciding who shall be Chairman. I cannot be answerable for what happens outside our Committee.

I believe that the hon. Members listed on the Order Paper will do extremely well the valuable work that we give them and I recommend them to the House.

10.35 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I wish to speak to my amendments to the Defence Committee motion, to leave out "Mr. John Cartwright" and after "Mr. John McWilliam" to insert "Mr. Ken Maginnis".

The long explanation that we have had has drawn all hon. Members' attention to the difficulty of achieving a fair balance of the various parties and the differing opinions represented in the House. However, in spite of the difficulties, it is absolutely vital that we get it right. The Ulster Unionist party does not worry at all if minor parties with only three hon. Members each get one place on the Committees. However, we have nine hon. Members and we seem only to be getting one place as well. That does not seem to be a very fair distribution.

The Chairman of the Committee of Selection drew attention to the long period that had to pass after the general election in 1983, and again this year, before we could reach this stage. It is only right that we should take time to consider who should sit on the Committees. The Committee of Selection must have got it very nearly right because all the amendments before us seek to change only two of the names. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members kindly not carry on conversations. It is difficult to hear.

Mr. Ross: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Committee of Selection got it very nearly right, I do not see why it should not prove itself to be totally infallible and get it 100 per cent. right next time round.

The Select Committees on Agriculture, on Defence, on Foreign Affairs, and on the Treasury and Civil Service all relate to Departments that directly exercise functions in Northern Ireland. The Department of Health and Social Security has a function that is almost direct because we have the concept of parity in social security payments and so on, and we are happy to have one member of our party on that Committee.

We have been told this evening that there are two spare places on the Transport and Home Affairs Committees, which do not have any direct application to Northern Ireland. It does not seem wise for an Ulster Unionist, or any Northern Ireland hon. Member, to be asked to serve on those Committees. The Army, on the other hand, is very active in Northern Ireland. It has a role there in defending the United Kingdom frontier. In Northern Ireland we have a modern type of guerilla war — a terrorist war. We have among us a man who has a tremendous amount of experience of these matters. We think that there is a real need for a voice from someone who has served in an active capacity in the part-time security forces in Northern Ireland. My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) is far better fitted to put that point of view in the Select Committee on Defence.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) and he is absolutely right. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis)—I told him what I intended to say and I do so with difficulty and diffidence—was a member of the Defence Committee during the previous Parliament and he was an active, conscientious and good member. However, the hon. Member for Londonderry, East must acknowledge that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone left that Committee and that Committee was without a member for 11 months. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) returned to that Committee—he had been put off it so that the House could meet the needs expressed by the Official Unionist party. How does the hon. Member for Londonderry, East square his desire for his hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone to be a member of that Committee—again given that he left that Committee unmanned for 11 months because of the decision of the Official Ulster Unionist party—with the fact that it did not want to take part in the proceedings of the House? Do those two arguments match up?

Mr. Ross: It may appear a strange concept to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), but the members of the Official Unionist party act on principle. At the last election, when we all stood in Northern Ireland for certain principles, we made it plain that we intended to return to the House. We had a mandate from our electors to do so. We have been back here since we won our seats and we intend to stay here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone served the Committee faithfully—as did the hon. Member for Hampshire, East. My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone has an expertise in defence that is not shared by any other Member of this House. I believe that he is the man who is best fitted to put the Northern Ireland point of view in that Committee. He has not only served with the Ulster Defence Regiment, but he was also a member of the Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association. As the House is aware, my hon. Friend's interests are not confined to the UDR because he takes a deep and responsible interest in the regular Army.

I believe that my hon. and gallant Friend is the best qualified person for membership of the Committee and I trust that the House will support us if there is a vote tonight.

10.42 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I wish to speak to my amendment to leave out "Mr. Martyn Jones" and the amendment that seeks, after "Mr. Elliot Morley", to insert "the Reverend Ian Paisley".

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), the proposer on behalf of the Committee of Selection. The proposer clearly stated that Her Majesty's official Opposition already have two extra proposed Committee members. Therefore I believe that the House can correct that tonight and ensure that the Opposition has only one extra person. That can be done if the House allows my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley) to take one of those two places. It is not enough for the hon. Member for Shipley to say that the official Opposition have more than they should and not to take the opportunity to correct that imbalance.

I believe that it is important that the Committees represent the democratic voice of the whole of the population of the United Kingdom. I listened with interest when the hon. Member for Shipley said that the Committees are selected on the basis of representing the whole of the United Kingdom and not particular parts of that kingdom.

I do not believe that Northern Ireland has proper and appropriate representation within the Committee structure. Under the present proposals the Social Democratic and Labour party has three Members in the House and has one member on the Agriculture Committee; the Official Unionist party has nine Members in the House and one member on a Committee, while the Ulster Democratic Unionist party has three Members in the House, but has no member on any Committee. It is interesting to suggest that there are two places left for the Ulster Members, ensuring that they were places that had no particular relevance to or particular impact on the lives of the people whom we represent in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does the position that the Committee of Selection has taken against the Ulster Unionists and their allies arise simply because they withdrew over the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Many hon. Members on the Government side of the House would like to know whether that is the case. We would understand and sympathise if that were the position.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention. I cannot and do not desire to attribute the reason why my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North was removed from the Agriculture Committee. But I genuinely have my suspicions as to why that was done. It is interesting to note that the SDLP has been chosen for the Agriculture Committee and that no representative of the Unionists has been chosen. The House must ask why that is so and answer the question as to whether it is justified.

Before the last election there were two seats on the Agriculture Committee and they were allocated to two Unionist Members. What the Committee of Selection has now done is to remove both the representatives of the Unionist family and replace them by one member of the SDLP. When we consider the election results, we find that the SDLP represents 154,000 people while the Unionists represent 394,000. Yet the SDLP Member was chosen in preference. And if I have understood correctly what has been said here tonight, the Committee of Selection deliberately chose the SDLP Member rather than one representing the majority community in Northern Ireland.

I would, therefore, ask the House to reconsider this matter. I believe that I can ask the House to do so because of the experience that my hon. Friend has in agriculture. I say without apology that my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North has wide experience because he acted as the chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the Northern Ireland Assembly and was commended by all the people of Northern Ireland for his ability as the voice of the agricultural community. Yet those who are proposing membership of the Committee have deliberately acted against all this in choosing an SDLP Member.

We are simply asking for fair play. We believe that it must be remembered that agriculture is the largest single employer in the whole of Northern Ireland. It is the largest industry in Northern Ireland.

It is not enough to say that the official Opposition have more than enough representatives. Perhaps I could point out that of this Committee six members are Conservatives —and it is right that the Government party should have a majority on the Committee — four members are Labour and one is from the Social Democratic and Labour party. So six are Conservatives and five are Labour. Surely it is appropriate that one of those Labour members should step aside and that the House ensures that the voice of the agricultural community in Northern Ireland is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North, taking the place of the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

10.48 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Since the beginning of this Parliament, I have been aware of the widespread eagerness among hon. Members to see the departmental Select Committees set up. I congratulate the members of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on the fact that their Committee has already been able to start work. There are just two general points that I should like to make in a short contribution to this debate, before the House decides on the Select Committee motions before us.

First, I think that the whole House appreciates the difficult task performed by the Committee of Selection. Following the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Procedure in 1977-78, the Committee was charged with the nomination of departmental Select Committees in the terms set out in Standing Order No. 104.

It can be an invidious duty to be asked to make judgments as to which of our fellow Members should be nominated to each departmental Select Committee. It is a tribute to the way in which the Committee of Selection carries out its work and produces nominations generally acceptable to the House, that only two alterations have been proposed to the nominations that have been put forward to be considered in today's debate.

I have listened with great attention to the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. W. McCrea) on the composition of the Agriculture Select Committee, and by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) about the Defence Select Committee. I believe, however, that the Committee of Selection's work gives it an overall view which enables it to give due weight

[Mr. John Wakeham]

to the minority parties in the departmental Select Committee system as a whole. For that reason I shall support its recommendations tonight.

My second point relates more generally to Select Committees. As I said at business questions last Thursday, the independence of Select Committees is, of course, something which I value highly. I believe the whole House does. Our present arrangements ensure that membership of the Committees is a matter for the House as a whole and I am sure that it is the right way for these matters to be decided. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has expressed some concern about the role of the Whips in the allocation between parties of the chairmanships of Select Committees. I hope that it will be helpful to the House—and reassuring to my hon. Friend—if I address this point.

Ultimately, it is for the Select Committees themselves to elect their own Chairmen. I hope that no hon. Member will dissent from that. In accordance with the conventions of the House, each Committee broadly respresents the composition of the Chamber. Thus, each has a majority of its members from the party in government, and it is reasonable to suppose that if each Committee considers in isolation the election of its Chairman, it will elect a member of that party.

There seem to me to be two substantial disadvantages in all the Select Committee Chairmen being from the majority party. First, I do not believe that this arrangement would recognise the rights of Opposition parties in a way which best reflects the traditions of the House, particularly in the context of Committees which are rightly proud of their all-party nature. Secondly, I do not think that the House itself would welcome arrangements which might seem to give the Government's views such sway over a Select Committee fiercely independent of the Government.

It is those disadvantages in all Select Committee Chairmen being from the majority party which cause me to believe that discussions through the usual channels about the basis on which the chairmanships might be allocated, provides a useful framework within which individual Select Committees elect their Chairmen.

Mr. Fry: I notice with great interest that my right hon. Friend said that it was up to the individual members of the Committee to select their Chairman. The problem is that my right hon. Friend is suggesting a procedure that has never been brought before the House for it to decide on. I for one would be happy if we had a formal arrangement on which the House had agreed, but I and some of my hon. Friends object to a sreies of arrangements about which we do not know and which are fixed between the two Whips' Offices. If the matter were made open and the House agreed, I for one would entirely accept what my right hon. Friend says.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes a serious point. I understand what he says and I hope that nothing that I have said suggests that I expect a Select Committee to do other than to choose its Chairman as it thinks best. However, the system by which there are discussions through the usual channels gives Committee members some understanding of the overall basis upon which they should then make their judgment. That is all that I am saying. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman says many things to keep us going for quite a long time.

The allocation through the usual channels provides a useful framework within which individual Select Committees elect their Chairmen. It means that they do so in the knowledge that there have been negotiations to find an arrangement for allocation which would be generally acceptable on both sides of the Chamber and take proper account of the rights of the Opposition as well as the majority party.

Finally, although some hon. Members may find it inappropriate to talk in terms of party about Select Committees, I would make this point: it is by setting up these Committees on the basis of arrangements which are broadly acceptable to——

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Scottish Members have listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox). It seems that there is an impasse facing the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and I should like to know whether it will be overcome before the Christmas recess?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a matter for the Committee of Selection and not for me. As my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has said, the Committee of Selection has had a problem in resolving the matter. I hope that it will be able to do so and bring its proposals before the House. I undertake that there will be a debate in the House to settle any matters——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): When?

Mr. Wakeham: As soon as I receive a report from the Committee of Selection. This is something that we can discuss through the usual channels. There will be no great difficulty in arranging a debate before Christmas as we have not yet announced the date when the recess will begin.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is the Government who face a problem with the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, not the Committee of Selection. It seems that the Conservative party must have a majority on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, but it was unsuccessful at the general election in getting a sufficient number of Conservative Members elected in Scotland to achieve such a majority. I understand that two Scottish Conservative Back Benchers have refused to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. This is a problem for the House, for the Government and for the Leader of the House himself. Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that he will find ways of resolving the problem, so that a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs can monitor the work of the Scottish Office within weeks rather than months?

Mr. Wakeham: As soon as the Committee of Selection completes its work, or tells the House that it cannot do so, I shall arrange for a debate as soon as practicable to enable the House to decide the issue. That will be done through the usual channels. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has raised matters that are being considered by the Committee of Selection and it would be inappropriate for me to say what the Committee should or could do in dealing with the problem with which it is confronted.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Committee of Selection have any sway over Conservative Members who refuse to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Wakeham: The Committee has to abide by the Standing Orders of the House, and I am quite sure that that is what it will do.

In setting up Select Committees on the basis of arrangements that are broadly acceptable to, and give proper recognition to, both sides of the House, we shall best enable them to carry out their work in the objective and non-partisan way that we have come to expect from them.

Judging from the amendments, there is considerable interest in the structure of the departmental Select Committee system and the arrangements for the Committees' election. I shall consider carefully any comments on these matters which may be made in the debate. Our decision will be directed to the membership of the Select Committees. Unless we decide not to set up the Committees—I do not believe that to be the will of the House—our choice is a simple and relatively limited one. Either we accept the amendments in the name of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster on the Select Committee on Agriculture and those in the name of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on the Select Committee on Defence, or we accept the Committee of Selection's original nominations. As I said earlier, I shall support the motions in the name of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection.

11 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Everyone's view of Select Committees is coloured by their own experiences. It might be helpful if I explained one of the experiences that I had on the Select Committee on the Environment that has rather coloured my view of the Committees. On one occasion I was ruled out of order for asking what was described as "a political question". This appeared to be an effort to keep politics out of Parliament.

The Committee at that time was chaired by Mr. Bruce Douglas-Mann, who later demonstrated the consistency of his commitment to keeping politics out of Parliament by joining the SDP. He then went even farther when he fought a by-election and achieved the double by keeping himself out of Parliament as well. Therefore, I have a slightly jaundiced view of the doings of Select Committees and occasionally I have sympathy for the views on the matter of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

We are considering the proposed membership of 12 Select Committees. As my hon. Friends from Scotland have already said, it ought to be 13 Select Committees. This has nothing at all to do with bad luck. The reason that we are not considering the 13th Select Committee is the incompetence of the Government and their inability to influence even their own Scottish Back Benchers.

It is ridiculous for the Leader of the House to blame the Committee of Selection for the fact that the Government cannot manage to turn up five hon. Members to serve on that Committee. It would be unsatisfactory if the House were asked to approve the membership of 12 Select Committees and to leave one out. However, it is uniquely unsatisfactory when the one that is left out is the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. That is because the Ministers at the Scottish Office are an unrepresentative rump of Scottish Tories whose colleagues and policies were overwhelmingly and rightly rejected by the people of Scotland at the general election.

It has never been more necessary for the Select Committee to scrutinise the doings and wrongdoings of the Scottish Office and its agencies. The membership of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not before us, because the Tories did so badly in Scotland at the general election. As a result, half the Scottish Tories are Ministers. They have to be, because that is the number needed to fill the Scottish Office. I do not know what can be said about the remainder. Some of them could be described as isolated eccentrics and we understand from rumour and from the newspapers that some of them are unwilling to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Those hon. Members are clearly willing to speak up for the people of Scotland—or for the people in those bits of Scotland that they purport to represent. Much worse, they are trying to stop Scottish Labour Members speaking up for the people of Scotland, and they are seeking to stifle criticism of the Government's policies.

Mr. McKelvey: My hon. Friend may have observed that there are not only no Scottish Front-Bench Conservatives, but no Scottish Back-Bench Conservatives in the House to discuss an issue that is very dear to Scotland.

Mr. Dobson: Clearly, from the sort of behaviour that my hon. Friend points out, the Scottish Tories are heading for no representation in Scotland. What has been done is quite unacceptable. It is up to the Government and not a matter for the Committee of Selection—which is but a pawn, or a collection of pawns, in this matter—to put the Government's house in order. If the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is not established before Christmas or immediately on our return after the recess, there can be no question of any further discussion through the usual channels or any other helpful arrangements or agreements with the Opposition. It will be an affront to the Scottish people and to Labour Members. There will be no further co-operation until that Committee is established.

As to the establishment of Committees, it might be worth reminding the House that we are considering 12 memberships, but it was originally proposed that there should be a Select Committee to shadow the Law Officers and the Lord Chancellor's Department. I understand that it was turned down because Lord Hailsham—who was the last but one Lord Chancellor—did not like it. I hope that the Government will give favourable consideration to the setting up of that Select Committee. Further, in view of what is happening to science and technology in Britain, it might be as well to consider the re-establishment of a Science and Technology Committee.

As the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) said, there have been delays in sorting out the membership of Select Committees, and there are suggestions on the Order Paper that it should be done in different ways. I should point out to some of the most cynical of my hon. Friends that there are advantages in Whips having some say on the membership of Select Committees. Their involvement gives new Members a better chance of obtaining places on Select Committees than most other procedures, and Whips can also bring about a fairer spread between regions and interest groups.

I must tell some of my hon. Friends that their suggestions with regard to other methods of choosing the

[Mr. Dobson]

members of Committees seem to be based on a misplaced supposition about the state of politics in Britain. Everyone seems to be obsessed with some misled French analysis of the British constitution of the 18th century. In political theory, the House controls the Government. As we all know, providing they have a decent majority, the Government control the House, which is a reversal of the procedure. By accepting the involvement of Whips, and by trying to come to some agreement between the two main parties, we are biting the bullet and doing the sensible thing.

At some time in the past, queries were raised about the appropriateness of what were understood to be Labour party nominations to the Defence Committee. There were suggestions that officials of the Ministry of Defence objected to the prospect of some Labour Members with particular views serving on those Select Committees. If those stories are true, those civil servants should look at their constitutional theory. They account to Members of Parliament; Members of Parliament do not account to civil servants, whoever they are or whatever Department they serve. If they are concerned about security, as they claim to be, they should look at the history of treachery in Britain. They need not look to the ranks of the Labour party for people who have betrayed their country. If they analyse those people who have been found out and found guilty of treachery they will discover that, generally, they were ex-public school, ex-Oxbridge people of apparently impeccable establishment credentials. I hope that we shall hear no more about that matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): With regard to treachery, is it not a fact that under the 18B regulations, which locked Moseley up from 1939 onwards as a threat to the security of this island, the only Member of Parliament who was detained during the war years was a Captain Ramsay, who was very much a Tory Member of Parliament?

Mr. Dobson: The only creditable matter that I can think of in that arrangement is that apparently the security services managed to rumble him at the time.

There is reference on the Order Paper to the freedom of action of members of Committees. In theory, the members of the Committees, and the Committees themselves, have a great deal of freedom of action. If those hon. Members wish to exercise that, and if they feel that they are being thwarted by the Government or the Civil Service, they could carry the House with them if they came to the House and asked for the additional powers to get people before them and to see all the papers involved.

That point brings me back to the Defence Committee. Some people seem to think that the Westland affair displayed one of the glories of the Select Committee system. Certain members of the Defence Committee did stalwart work during the Westland affair trying to discover the facts that were being hidden from the public. Basically, the Government and the head of the Civil Service treated the Defence Committee with utter contempt. Had that happened in the United States, had a Republican President of the United States allowed the United States Administration to treat a committee of Congress with the same contempt, even Barry Goldwater would have moved for the impeachment of that President.

It is idle for us to pretend that our Select Committees have in practice the powers, status or authority of the congressional committees in the United States. I hope, therefore, that the new Committee members will join those members of Committees who have tried to exercise their muscle in the past and, if there is trouble or obstruction from the Government or the Civil Service when a Select Committee tries to get at the truth, I hope that the Government Back Benchers who make up the majority in these matters will support the Select Committees and not cravenly support the Government or anyone else obstructing the Select Committees. If that does not happen, I believe that the Select Committees will eventually fall into disrepute.

A lot of hard work has been done by Select Committee members and much useful information has been gained and released. However, the Government have taken scarcely a blind bit of notice of anything that any of the Select Committees have said. In those circumstances, we must regard the Select Committee system as on trial. Besides scrutinising the Government and keeping an eye on them, the House must scrutinise the Select Committees to ensure that they are discharging their functions.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I know that my hon. Friend is being his usual charitable self. However, will he rephrase his comments? Would it be more a propos not to ask the House to scrutinise the Select Committees, but to ask the House to pay more attention to the Committee's reports and so use the reports more constructively.

Mr. Dobson: I fully accept the view that my hon. Friend has expressed. He did such stalwart work in difficult circumstances — long service in hard stations — on the Defence Committee. It is difficult for hon. Members to make much use of Select Committee reports if they never come before the House. The House must take the Select Committees more seriously if they are to discharge the functions for which they were established.

In commending the unamended memberships to my right hon. and hon. Friends, I do so on the basis that we need better and more vigorous performances from the Select Committees, and, above all, we need the backing of hon. Members on both sides of the House to give the Select Committees the muscle to do the job that they were established to do.

Mr. McKelvey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order for me at the end of the debate to divide the House on the membership of each of the Select Committees as listed if I feel that there has been no adequate response to the question of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Would it be in order for me to divide the House on each of the Committees?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. McKelvey *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I said that that would be in order.

11.14 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): To say that the appointment of the Select Committees that we are debating is long overdue would be a masterly understatement. Therefore, I hope that the House will come to a clear-cut decision in favour of their establishment today. However, having said that, one must recognise that there have been considerable difficulties in

the setting-up of those Committees. No one who has listened to the debate or to the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, can doubt that these are complex matters and that a great many individual and group interests are involved.

Nonetheless, it is surely absurd that we have had to wait six months before we have reached the stage where we are likely to reach a decision on these matters. Even if this Parliament goes its full term, we shall have lost about one tenth of the entire Parliament without the Committees being able to do their job of scrutinising the Executive and making sure that the Departments for which they are responsible are properly monitored.

Therefore it is tremendously important that we should ensure that we do not for a third time run into the same problem as we recognise has happened on this occasion and as happened in 1983. It is not as if these problems were not foreseen in the previous Parliament. I remind the House of the first report of the Liaison Committee in April 1985 which referred to this very matter and stated:

"The House met after the last general election on 15th June 1983. The select committees, since they had continued to exist under Standing Orders, only needed to be nominated before they could start work. It can be appreciated that, with so many new Members in the House, it took a little time to decide on suitable names. But we feel that the delay, which continued until the House nominated the departmental committees on 9th and 14th December, was excessive."

However, we find ourselves in precisely the same position as in 1983. The Liaison Committee also recommended:

"Standing Orders should be amended so that a suitable time-limit is imposed to ensure that committees are nominated soon after any general election."

As my hon. Friend, the Chairman of the Committee of Selection pointed out, it is perfectly true that there was a recess between the date of the election and tonight, and obviously that causes some problems. Nonetheless, it is a delay of six months. Had we managed, as the Liaison Committee recommended that we should, to set up the Committees in the recess, although the House was not sitting, the Clerks and members of those Committees could have been working through the summer recess. The House had allocated resources to those Committees so that they could do their work. It is generally agreed that that work is extremely valuable and the number of hon. Members in the Chamber this evening shows the extent to which the House regards the matter as important.

In replying to the Liaison Committee's report, the Government pointed out that the matter was,

"far from being exclusively in the Government's hands; and, especially after a General Election, a considerable time may have to elapse before it is known, for example, whether particular Opposition Members will be available to serve."

That is one of the problems that we have been facing. However, surely it should not be necessary for the delay on that point to lead to the kind of delay that we experienced both in 1983 and now.

I considered whether there are other possible solutions to this problem. The Public Accounts Commission, for example, runs over from one Parliament to another. It was re-established as soon as we returned after the election, with those hon. Members who still remained Members of the House. Of course, we cannot do that with the Select Committee structure because, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has pointed out, the Committees have a Government majority and if the parties were to change places at election time, we should end up with a rump of Committees, which, until they were reconstituted, would probably, since the old system had a majority of Government Members, have a majority of Opposition Members.

However, the solution is not necessarily to be found on those lines. I believe that the only answer is to set a deadline because that is the only way in which we shall ensure that we do not waste an enormous amount of time. Clearly, that should be done in terms of sitting days, rather than on an absolute number of days because there may be the problem of the recess, as has been mentioned.

I am anxious that we should proceed without further delay, so I shall not delay the House for more than a moment longer.

Mr. Mates: I have listened carefully to my right hon. Friend, who is echoing the plea of our hon. Friend the Chairman of the Committee on Selection that he needs more help to resolve the dilemmas facing him. Could we not all ask that this be referred to the Procedure Committee so that a ruling could be given and the House could take a vote on how we should proceed at the beginning of the next Parliament?

Mr. Higgins: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but it is a matter which has previously been considered by the Liaison Committee, which is probably a more appropriate body to consider this issue, as it deals with general problems affecting the co-ordination of Select Committees. The House will undoubtedly wish to consider my hon. Friend's suggestion, but we have already had a specific recommendation from that Committee and I hope that the Government Front Bench will be prepared to reconsider their original reply. That is the only way that we can avoid this situation arising on yet another occasion, to the detriment of the House.

Both in 1979 and 1983 a considerable number of Committees had Opposition Chairmen. That is of great importance if the system is indeed to appear to be an all-party system, representing the House of Commons as a whole. I understand my right hon. Friend's point and I certainly agree that this is important. However, I have one fear on this score. This Government under successive Leaders of the House, all of whom have supported the Select Committee system enthusiastically, have gone along with the all-party approach. We should consider whether, to avoid the participation of the usual channels and to ensure that this advantage is preserved for the future, some more clearly established convention should be made that a certain number of Select Committee Chairmanships go to Opposition Members in the same way that the convention exists, for example, with the Public Accounts Committee.

I hope that we can reach a rapid conclusion on this matter so that the Select Committees can get on with the work which all hon. Members agree is of great value.

11.22 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I rise to add my anxiety and anger to that which the House has already heard about the Government's failure to establish the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

Our argument is not with the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) who, I am prepared to accept, has gone about the matter with integrity and good purpose. Our complaint

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

is entirely with the Government and their dealings with their own Scottish representatives. I can sympathise with the hon. Gentleman who may in the past have dealt with various forms of intransigence but who, I am sure, has never dealt with such crass mediocrity as he finds in that curious quintet of Scottish Back-Bench Tory Members.

The Government's failure to allow, or to insist on, the establishment of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee is astonishing for four reasons. First, whether hon. Members like it or not, there is a distinctive Scottish complexion to the make-up of politics and the division of parties. If the Tory party is determined simply to ignore that division and dismiss that different complexion, it is building up problems and difficulties far beyond anything that can be imagined at present.

The second reason is that the Scottish Office, uniquely among the Departments covered by the Select Committee, has a vast range of interests to represent, and thus to scrutinise. Why on earth we can have 12 Committees set up to cover specific Departments, but cannot have a 13th Committee to deal with a Department that covers everything from sport to agriculture, education and health in Scotland, may be comprehensible to Conservative Members, but will certainly not be comprehensible to the people of Scotland. They will see it as exonerating yet again their judgment as the general election — a judgment upon the crassness and ignorance of the Tory party in that country.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): While he is on this line of argument, would my hon. Friend care to reflect that the lack of attention of Scottish Conservative Members to the issue under consideration tonight is no more aptly illustrated than by the fact that not a single one of them has bothered to come to the Chamber for this vitally important debate? Does that not underline their lack of concern for the Scottish people and their interests?

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) for drawing attention to a fact of which the Scottish people are increasingly aware: that not only the ministerial but the Back-Bench Scottish Conservatives are inept, useless, seldom here and more likely to be trawled from the liquid dungeons of the House than to be found here at a time such as this?

Those of us who have been here for only a few months have already become used to the tartan comedy shows of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), swaying in the non-existent breeze as he talks incomprehensible nonsense to the House. We have grown accustomed to the hon. Member for Tayside (Mr. Walker) turning up occasionally in his kilt to inform the House and his Front Bench that he is so idle that he will not even participate in the basic functions of the Scottish Select Committee. We have grown used to the five-man comedy turn of Scottish Back-Benchers. However, the message that goes out again from the House is that they serve no interests except their own tiny, parochial, selfish interests. That is what will make the five turn into three, and the three turn into dust, at the next general election.

The third reason for my belief that the Committee should be set up is that, whatever may be said about other Select Committees, there is no denying that the Scottish Select Committee has done useful work during its career. We often hear boasts from Conservative Members about the work of Locate in Scotland. Let no hon. Member be in any doubt that Locate in Scotland would not exist, far less be doing good and useful work for the Scottish economy, had its development been left to the Conservatives. Let no one doubt that it is because of the work of the Scottish Select Committee that Locate in Scotland exists today.

Mr. Douglas: We are taking a good deal of time on this issue. I think that the procedure would be facilitated if we could have an assurance from the Leader of the House —perhaps he will seek to intervene on my hon. Friend's remarks—that the Scottish Select Committee will be a major priority for him, and that, given the work of the Selection Committee, he will try to expedite the matter before the Christmas recess.

Mr. Wakeham: May I make the position clear as I understand it? I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, that he hopes to finish his deliberations and to make the appropriate report to the House on the views of his Committee on the Scottish Select Committee. When that is done I undertake to arrange as soon as practicable a debate upon it.

Mr. Wilson: I value that undertaking, but before I sit down I will ask for a time scale.

To finish the point about the valuable work that has been done by the Scottish Select Committee, there are many hundreds of Ministry of Defence jobs in Glasgow that would not be there had it not been for the work of the Scottish Select Committee. Many areas of Government have been subject to valuable scrutiny by that Committee.

Fourthly, the nonsense is that there are dozens of hon. Members ready and willing to serve on it. The reason that it will not be set up is the attachment of the Government to extremely complicated arithmetic. They have only five Back Benchers. At least two of them are so numb and thick in stating that they will not serve on the Committee— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker.: Order. Hon. Members should try to keep the temperature down.

Mr. Wilson: We hear a great deal from the Government side about the virtues of not yielding to blackmail. The astonishing fact is that the two hon. Members who represent Perthshire have succeeded in holding the House to blackmail. That is why we do not have this Committee. Many hon. Members are willing to serve on it and there is much work to be done. I ask for an undertaking——

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare) *rose*——

Mr. Wilson: I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that we have only 14 minutes more.

Mr. Wiggin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have had a deliberate personal attack on two of my hon. Friends. Can we have an assurance from the hon. Member for Cunningham, North (Mr. Wilson) that he informed them in advance, in accordance with the custom of the House?

Mr. Speaker.: That is a custom which the hon. Gentleman, who is a new Member, may not know about. It is a convention that if an hon. Member is to be attacked in the House, he is forewarned.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I deeply regret that the two hon. Members are not here to hear themselves being attacked. I withdraw with pleasure.

There is a need for the Scottish Select Committee and there are hon. Members willing to serve on it. The Government should set up the Committee or be answerable to the people of Scotland.

11.32 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I contribute to the debate more out of sadness than anger. I was looking just now on the Order Paper for the composition of the Scottish Select Committee. It was not there. Yet virtually three quarters of the speeches and interventions in this short debate have been directed to something that does not appear on the Order Paper. I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that to have a debate of merely one hour and a half on a matter that is of deep concern to the House is inadequate and an abuse of Back Benchers.

I listened with great interest to the excellent speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). If the Front Bench had listened to what he said, a great deal of what has happened in recent months would not be repeated, to the advantage of the House.

If my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House expects me to believe for one moment that the usual channels on this occasion have not exerted abnormal influence over the composition of Select Committees, I am afraid he misunderstands me. I do not go along with what he said.

I am aware, from information that has come to me, that the Committee of Selection, led by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), does not consider every application put to it by hon. Members, because the Labour party presents a list of those Members it wants nominated to the Select Committees. Therefore, the integrity and independence of the Select Committees are clearly in doubt and have been undermined and debased by the activities of the usual channels of the House. As a Member of the House, I follow the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing. I have served uninterrupted for 13 years on the Select Committee for Social Services. In that time, under the leadership of the redoubtable lady, Ms. Renée Short, we had unanimous Committee reports. We did not need to have the usual channels to dictate to us a balance. The Select Committees can do for themselves what, sadly, the Chamber so often fails to do: to establish common ground and find unity in the interests of the people.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I will not give way. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), has a Scottish constituency and has had more than a fair run in the debate.

As an evergreen, long-serving Back Bencher—and I consider that I will continue to be a long-serving Back Bencher — I believe entirely and totally in the Select Committee system. It is one way in which genuine Back Benchers can exercise some influence, albeit no power, over the Executive and Government. To my mind, it is a tragedy that the usual channels have sought to influence the Committees as to who should be their Chairmen, before the Committees have even met.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I am sorry, but there is very little time and I wish to get one or two things on record.

It is important that Committees have the integrity and independence to elect their own chairmen. For my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to say that the usual channels are merely giving guidance to those Committees is absolute rubbish, and he knows it. I say to the Front Bench that, for the Conservative party never to have taken control by way of the Chair of the Select Committee for Social Services shows how disdainful so many quarters of the Conservative party are of social services. It is the biggest spending Department of State, £45 billion, and not once in 20 years have we taken the Chair of that Committee. I believe that the chairmanship was offered to the Conservative party on this occasion, but that it was declined because the party was not prepared to trade off another Committee. I think that that is a great shame. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Gentleman a fair hearing. I am finding it difficult to hear down here.

Mr. Winterton: For the Back Benchers of the House — you, Mr. Speaker, safeguard their interests — the Select Committees are the only way in which they can positively and constructively help the country and guide and monitor the Government. I believe in Select Committees and I say to both Front Benches of the House,"If you genuinely are concerned"——

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I do not intend to give way to the hon. Lady. No doubt she will have ample opportunity to display her talents on the Select Committee.

I plead with the House to safeguard the integrity and independence of the Social Services Select Committee and all other Select Committees of the House. One day, the Government may be on the Opposition Benches. *[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Wise *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Lady raising a point of order, or was she unable to speak in the debate?

Mrs. Wise: I believe that it is a point of order, Mr. Speaker. First, is it in order for the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) to seek to interfere in the representation of Labour Members by tabling motions naming Labour Members? Secondly, in view of the advice given to one of my hon. Friends about communicating with colleagues in the House, is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to name other hon. Members on the Order Paper without consultation or information being given to them?

Mr. Speaker: It was perfectly in order for the hon. Gentleman to put down his amendment. The hon. Lady should know that it was not selected for Division.

Mr. Winterton: I believe that in everything that I have done about the re-establishment of Select Committees I have adhered to the procedures, rules, regulations and precedents of the House. I intend to continue to do so. Not only do I value the Select Committee system as a way in which I and many of my colleagues can play a positive, constructive part in the House, but in addition I believe in the democratic procedures of the House.

11.41 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The creation of departmental Select Committees was one of the greatest constitutional steps forward this century. However, at this point in our history, the departmental Select Committees need the support of all hon. Members if they are to progress any further. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) pointed out, they are now at something of a crossroads. If they are left to their own devices, to the patronage of the Whips or to the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, they may decline into misuse and abuse. If they are supported and reinvigorated, they may find a real role in the House in defending and extending our democracy.

The reason that we have had such long delay in 1987 is pretty much the same as that in 1983: the Executive—the Government—do not wish to see strong, effective departmental Select Committees. In 1983, the reason that was put forward was that the shadow Cabinet had not completed its elections. There was no reason why shadow Cabinet elections should delay the nomination of Select Committees. If vacancies had arisen, they could have been filled in the normal way. When individuals have been promoted, and thus have vacated their seats, new elections for nominations would take place. In 1987, the excuses that were put forward related to rows over chairmanship —which had more to do with petty jealousies than with the constitutional significance of Select Committees— and the role of the Select Committee on Defence. That is clearly a far more serious matter. It is bad enough having people in one's own party telling one who one must have on a Select Committee, but it is intolerable for people in the Ministries or Departments that are to be supervised or monitored to tell one who should be on such Committees, and the House should not put up with it.

The only way forward is for hon. Members to take control of Select Committees. I have asked the Leader of the House to consider a series of proposals and to re-establish the Select Committee on Procedure, so that it may then consider such proposals and come back to the Floor of the House with proposals for improvement. One such proposal is the direct election of members to Select Committees, with each hon. Member having one vote for a member of each Select Committee. With one vote per hon. Member, there would be no question of a slate of 10 or 12 getting elected. Indeed, a broad cross-section of hon. Members would be represented. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has two minutes more and there is a great deal of noise. I would ask hon. Members to listen and not to carry on private conversations.

Mr. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If each Member had one vote for each Select Committee place, a broad cross-section of hon. Members would be elected. We could have a system whereby each member elected would need to get at least 50 votes.

Another essential reform is that the Select Committees, by Standing Order of the House, should be established by a given date specified in the Standing Orders. In addition, the Select Committees' powers need to be re-examined—notably we need a power for Bills to be referred to a Select Committee after Second Reading for a period of six or eight weeks so that the Select Committee, as of right, can take evidence and interview witnesses before a Bill proceeds——

It being one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order of the House [27 November], to put the Question on any amendment selected by him which was then moved and then to put successively the Question on the motion relating to Agriculture and any Questions necessary to dispose of the motions in the name of Sir Marcus Fox relating to Defence, Education, Science and Arts, Employment, Energy, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Social Services, Trade and Industry, Transport and Welsh Affairs, which were then made, and of any amendments thereto which had been selected by him and which were then moved.*

Amendment proposed, to leave out 'Mr. Martyn Jones.'. *—[Rev. William McCrea.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 34, Noes 172.

Division No. 93] **[11.46 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Ashdown, Paddy	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Beggs, Roy	Paisley, Rev Ian
Beith, A. J.	Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Budgen, Nicholas	Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Cran, James	Stanbrook, Ivor
Fearn, Ronald	Steel, Rt Hon David
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*	Stevens, Lewis
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Howells, Geraint	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Janman, Timothy	Wallace, James
Kennedy, Charles	Winterton, Mrs Ann
Kilfedder, James	Winterton, Nicholas
Maclennan, Robert	
Maginnis, Ken	Tellers for the Ayes:
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*	Rev. William McCrea and
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*	Mr. Clifford Forsythe.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Allen, Graham	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Clay, Bob
Ashton, Joe	Clelland, David
Baldry, Tony	Cohen, Harry
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Conway, Derek
Batiste, Spencer	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Corbyn, Jeremy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Crowther, Stan
Bermingham, Gerald	Cryer, Bob
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cummings, J.
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Boswell, Tim	Cunningham, Dr John
Boyes, Roland	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bradley, Keith	Darling, Alastair
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Dewar, Donald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Dixon, Don
Buchan, Norman	Dobson, Frank
Buckley, George	Doran, Frank
Butcher, John	Dorrell, Stephen
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Douglas, Dick
Canavan, Dennis	Dover, Den
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Duffy, A. E. P.
Cartwright, John	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Durant, Tony

Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ilisley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Neubert, Michael
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Squire, Robin
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Pat
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Michael Shaw and
Sir John Stradling Thomas.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Calum A. Macdonald, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Paul Marland, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Jerry Wiggin and Mrs. Ann Winterton be members of the Agriculture Committee.

DEFENCE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Bruce George, Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Jonathan Sayeed, Mr. Neil Thorne and Mr. John Wilkinson be members of the Defence Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Amendment proposed, to leave out 'Mr. John Cartwright'.—*[Mr. William Ross.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 41, Noes 133.

Division No. 94] **[11.59 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Budgen, Nicholas
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janman, Timothy
Kilfedder, James
McWilliam, John
Maginnis, Ken
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Hal
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thorne, Neil
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

NOES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clelland, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ilisley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark

Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCartney, Ian
McGrady, E. K.
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 147, Noes 31.

Division No. 95] **[12.09 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Janman, Timothy
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Bruce George, Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Jonathan Sayeed, Mr. Neil Thorne and Mr. John Wilkinson be members of the Defence Committee.

Education, Science and Arts

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Win Griffiths, Mrs. Maureen Hicks, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Timothy Raison, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Malcolm Thornton and Sir Gerard Vaughan be members of the Education, Science and Arts Committee. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 15.

Division No. 96] **[12.20 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe

Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ilsley, Eric
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Kilfedder, James
McCrea, Rev William
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Rev. Ian Paisley and
Mr. William Ross.

Question accordingly agreed to.

EMPLOYMENT

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Ken Eastham, Sir Philip Goodhart, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Ron Leighton, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. James Paice, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Lewis Stevens and Mr. David Young be members of the Employment Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 17.

Division No. 97] **[12.31 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ilsley, Eric
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Clifford Forsythe and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

ENERGY

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Michael Brown, Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. Geoffrey Dickens, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Rhodri Morgan, Mr. Peter Rost, Mr. Alex Salmond and Mr. Tony Speller be members of the Energy Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 16.

Division No. 98] **[12.43 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

ENVIRONMENT

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Peter L. Pike, Sir Hugh Rossi and Mr. Robin Squire be members of the Environment Committee — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 116, Noes 17.

Division No. 99] **[12.54 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul

Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and
Sir Michael Shaw.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Maginnis and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Foreign Affairs

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. David Howell, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. Jim Lester, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, Mr. Bowen Wells and Mr. Michael Welsh be members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House proceeded to a Division:

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to submit a manuscript amendment, suggesting that my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) and for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) be omitted from motions put forward by the Committee of Selection as they apparently are no longer here to vote or to show interest in the proceedings?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am not prepared to accept manuscript amendments along those lines.

The House having divided: Ayes 113, Noes 16.

Division 10] **[1.04 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Stradling Thomas
and Sir Michael Shaw

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
McCrea, Rev William
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Maginnis and
Mr. Peter Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Home Affairs

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. David Ashby, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. David Clelland, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. Ivor Stanbrook, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Tony Worthington be members of the Home Affairs Committee—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 111, Noes 16.

Division No. 101] **[1.15 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim

Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Hugh Rossi and
Mr. Michael Mates.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Social Services

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Terry Patchett, Sir David Price, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Roger Sims, the Reverend Martin Smyth, Mr. Nicholas Winterton, Mrs. Audrey Wise and Mr. Tim Yeo be members of the Social Service Committee.

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you reconsider the ruling that you gave some minutes ago to the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller), who asked you to consider accepting a manuscript amendment to delete the names of the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) from the motion? As you were unwilling to accept that, might it not be in order for us to advise the House to vote against this particular motion on the basis that those hon. Members have slighted the House by going home and failing to turn up for the Division?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Who stays and who goes home is nothing to do with the Chair, and I am relieved that it is not.

The House having divided: Ayes 106, Noes 18.

Division No. 102] **[1.27 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Hugh Rossi and
Mr. Michael Mates.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Kilfedder, James
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Alice Mahon and
Ms. Dawn Primarolo.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Trade and Industry

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Stan Crowther, Dr. John Gilbert, Sir Anthony Grant, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr. Barry Porter and Mr. Kenneth Warren be members of the Trade and Industry Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 111, Noes 16.

Division No. 103] **[1.38 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michael, Alun
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Hugh Rossi and
Mr. Michael Mates.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Willian Ross and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Transport

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. David Gilroy Bevan, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr. Terry Dicks, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Peter Fry, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. David Mudd and Mr. Neville Trotter be members of the Transport Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

The House divided: Ayes 108, Noes 17.

Division No. 104] **[1.47 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter

Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Hugh Rossi and
Mr. Michael Mates.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
McCrea, Rev William
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. Peter Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Welsh Affairs

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Sir Raymond Gower, Mr. Gwilym Jones, Mr. Richard Livsey, Sir Anthony Meyer, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Keith Raffan, Sir John Stradling Thomas, Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, Mr. Gareth Wardell and Mr. Alan W. Williams be members of the Welsh Affairs Committee — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection]*

The House divided: Ayes 109, Noes 16.

Division No. 105] **[1.57 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Paddy
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Conway, Derek
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haynes, Frank
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, E. K.
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michael, Alun
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Page, Richard
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Hugh Rossi and
Mr. Michael Mates.

AYES

Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Clay, Bob
Cryer, Bob
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kilfedder, James
Maginnis, Ken
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. A. Cecil Walker and
Rev. William McCrea.

Question accordingly agreed to.

PETITION

Rating Reform

2.8 am

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I have the honour of presenting a petition to the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled on behalf of Park community council, and, associated with it, the following organisations in the constituency of Maryhill: employees of East park children's home, the Glenavon action group, the Lochburn tenants' association, the Oran street sheltered housing tenants' association, the Woodside tenants' association and numerous other constituents of Maryhill.

So keen were they to display their opposition to this iniquitous Act affecting Scotland that they queued outside on a rainy day to sign the petition. All those who signed it are reaffirming the opposition that they showed to the poll tax at the time of the general election. In supporting the petition, I would point out that in a turnout of over 52,000 at the general election, only 3,000 could be found to support the one candidate who advocated the poll tax.

I am aware of no organisation in Maryhill that supports the poll tax.

At a later date I shall bring forward further petitions from organisations in Maryhill opposed to this poll tax. Unless, in the coming weeks and months, the Government pay attention to the wishes of the people of Scotland, expressed here tonight by my constituents and by others the result of the next general election in Scotland will be even more unfortunate for the Government.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. John Baker (Overtime)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

2.9 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): This Adjournment debate concerns a simple constituency case that, rather like Topsy, has grown and grown.

This case is also a splendid example of democracy at work. A constituent may have a grievance against a local health authority, but is stonewalled by that authority. He can take that matter one stage further by approaching his Member of Parliament, who will have the case put before the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman refuses to take up the case, he can, through his Member of Parliament, put his case to the Minister. If the Minister declines to take up the matter and refers it all the way back to the health authority, there is still the forum of the House in which a constituent's claim, right or wrong, can be heard rather than brushed away by one side or another.

My constituent, Mr. John Baker, worked for four and a half years for the Hillingdon health authority as a medical technician No. 3. He left that authority on 11 October 1985. He came to me in November 1986 and claimed that he had been paid only 27·1 per cent. out of a total of 324·4 hours of overtime owing. He had put in that claim before leaving. He told me that he was paid the 27·1 per cent. with no explanation and that that was the end of the matter.

Mr. Baker came to my surgery on 15 November and, on 17 November, I wrote to Hillingdon health authority. I received a letter back from the chairman, Mr. David Swarbrick, on 12 December 1986.

No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your capacity as a constituency Member of Parliament, have had experience of the "try-on merchants" who come along to our surgeries. They put their case and think that one letter from their Member of Parliament will ensure that all their problems will disappear, even though they know that they have no right to what they are asking for.

I received a reply from David Swarbrick that effectively said that Mr. Baker did not deserve and was not entitled to the money. I communicated that fact to Mr. Baker. He vehemently rejected those comments and drew my attention to a couple of points. One of those was that, when he put in his claim to the salaries and wages department, it was accompanied by a letter signed by his departmental head, Dr. Thompson, the chief physicist, that said:

"I write to confirm that payment for 324·4 hours is due to Mr. Baker."

That letter did not appear to carry any weight with David Swarbrick, who wrote back to say that the claim had been investigated and checked by the internal audit department. However, if I was looking for a shining example of efficiency and accountancy control, the Health Service would not come top of my list.

My constituent then wrote directly to Dr. Thompson regarding the memo from David Swarbrick and he received a reply that I regard as a triumph in balancing truth and expediency. He got a letter back which used phrases such as

"My advice to you, which may be painful, is to accept the ex-gratia payment offered by the health authority".

The letter went on to say:

[Mr. Richard Page]

"It is unfortunately true that we cannot independently confirm the time clock figures in detail"

and

"I am sure that everybody acted in good faith".

Here was the management of the health authority telling an employee that it was terribly sorry but the wage control system was inadequate, so it would not pay him, that he, the employee, was to be penalised for the failure of management.

I was somewhat puzzled by this. I looked at the work carried out by this department and by Dr. Thompson and found that it is responsible for calibrating the scanners and for making sure that all the X-ray machines are in order. If this man is to be dismissed by the internal audit department of the Hillingdon health authority as being 72·9 per cent. wrong, I shudder to think what happens when the other work of the department is being done. I hope that the scanners are not calibrated with such a margin of error: they will not do a very good job.

I decided that, if I were not going to get any further with the health authority, I would go to the Ombudsman, because there were one or two details which I thought could be regarded as maladministration; but that was dismissed and it was decided that my constituent could not be taken on. So I wrote to my hon. Friend in the Department. I will not go through the series of letters that went not only to her but originally, before the election, to the noble Lady the Baroness Trumpington. But in the end it was all referred back to the Hillingdon health authority, the very body that had made no progress. So I decided to delve into this matter just a little more closely myself.

I found that this 27·1 per cent. payment had been made tax-free. I wondered what special arrangements the Hillingdon health authority had to pay money tax-free. Then I discovered that this payment had been made not only to Mr. Baker but also to three other employees who had continued to work for the authority. One of these gentlemen received his payment tax-free. I wondered whether it would be possible to have some of my parliamentary salary paid tax-free, because that would be of immense benefit to me.

I am not an extrovert Member of Parliament. I am not one of those who go in for the photo calls and the flashy publicity, but I have got my teeth into this item. I really would welcome an answer rather than having the run-around that I have been getting for nearly a year. So I decided to look into the matter even more closely, and I found from another of the three gentlemen whom I mentioned a little earlier — who, according to the chairman of the health authority, Mr. Swarbrick, are satisfied with the arrangement—that he was absolutely convinced that the hours that they had put in for were absolutely correct. I am told that the system was changed on 1 January 1986, but I have discovered that they are still using the same time clocks; however, instead of allowing the hours to build up and up over the year, payment is made each week.

Further investigation showed that it has been the practice in the past for workers to have time off if they were owed money on overtime, if they left for other employment. I have three examples of this having been done in the past. In one instance—I am now going back to 1975—I discovered that when moneys were owing, they were paid off at just over 50 per cent.—tax-free. But, of course, income tax then stood at 33 per cent. in the pound and the difference was not so great between that and the total payment. I understand that some of them had a little time off in lieu to make up the balance.

So there appears to have been a known system, of which my constituent was a part, that allowed hours to accumulate in large numbers and then be wiped off in tax-free payments and/or time off in lieu. I must emphasise that an employee—not the management—worked in a health authority where it appeared to be standard working practice to allow all that to happen and then to be settled in the way that I have described. The House can appreciate my constituent's surprise when he found that the rules that operated for the hours that he had legitimately clocked up did not apply in his case.

It was the known working practice in that hospital for employers to have time off in lieu. My constituent's claim was endorsed by his manager. His claim was verified by a colleague, and there has been no explanation.

I should like from my hon. Friend some answer to the problem. I am sorry that it has been presented so late at night after a series of important but rather wasteful and time-consuming Divisions. I welcome what my hon. Friend has to say in reply, but if she has no particular answer to the question tonight and would like to write to me later, that would be adequate.

2.21 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on winning the ballot and raising the question of Mr. Baker's dispute with Hillingdon health authority. He has shown, once again, the concern for his constituents that he has shown on many occasions in the House.

Problems appear to have been happening with overtime recording in the medical physics department of Mount Vernon hospital as far back as 10 years ago. Mr. Baker was not then involved. He did not join the department until 1981. But one employee managed to build a backlog of unclaimed, unsupported overtime between 1976 and 1978, which caused some concern.

As a result, in 1978, a flexitime system for the laboratory was brought in to enable staff to take time off in lieu. The object of the exercise, as least in part, was to reduce the cost of overtime to the health authority. One condition introduced was that overtime payments should be claimed promptly and no backlog accumulated. For some time, overtime claims were submitted regularly by all technicians and no backlog of official verifiable overtime was allowed to accumulate.

In October 1981, as my hon. Friend says, Mr. Baker joined the health authority and started working in the laboratory. He left in October 1985. Month by month, as required, he submitted an overtime claim, which was paid promptly and over the four years he had been paid approximately £650, plus call-in payments, and presumably he had taken time off in lieu as well, as was agreed.

During the four years, he submitted no other claims for overtime payments, was not in dispute with his employer, did not operate any grievance procedure, and all his claims were fully met, without dispute and on time. In other words, during that time he appeared to have no complaints whatever about his employment. Then he gave in his notice and, at the same time, submitted a claim for four

years' overtime over and above that already paid, for the sum of £1,674. At about the same time, three other colleagues in the same laboratory made similar claims of roughly the same magnitude as Mr. Baker's.

The claim was based on time clock readings. The clocks were activated by a key insert system. The key is turned when the operative comes in, a light goes on and from that point it starts to accumulate time. The key is specific to that particular clock and it is held by one person only—that particular operative. The clocks go on accumulating hours if no one turns them off — for example, if someone forgets when they go home for lunch, or, indeed, for the weekend. As far as I know, they cannot be corrected or turned back. The operative himself has a key for his own clock and only he can operate it.

Clearly, that is not the height of technical achievement in timekeeping and I was disappointed to hear this afternoon that they are still in use. I have conveyed to the health authority my views on whether that is appropriate. Nor is it a system that auditors would back for payments to the operatives concerned. It was never intended for such use. I am told that the machines were intended merely to show which technicians were on duty. The readings were kept fortnightly or weekly but were used for not very clear purposes. The recording system for overtime, which was the basis for payment, was a book or timesheet, which was verified regularly by the supervisor. That is the standard system, and it is still in use. It has given rise to no disputes since Mr. Baker left and it has satisfied the internal auditor. It accords with overtime systems that are in use outside the NHS.

It further appears that Mr. Baker's machine was faulty on more than one occasion and was giving false readings. As overtime was paid from the timesheets, it did not appear to local management to matter very much. It appears that Mr. Baker was not concerned either. He did not submit claims for extra hours at any time in the four years except when he was due to leave.

I note the points that are made in the correspondence —I have a large file on it—and those that have been made tonight about the confirmation given by the head of department, Dr. Thompson, to Mr. Baker's claim. Dr. Thompson neither sought nor obtained authorisation for the acknowledgement that he made of the claim, which was made up to four years after the event. Dr. Thompson had no means of verifying the claim, and the clock was not intended as a record of payment. It was never used in that way, and if it had been the district health authority would have exercised its obligations to ensure that the clock was calibrated and functioned properly, was used accurately and was taken into the payment system regularly. In the two years since the claim was raised, the internal audit and management have ensured that the staff know how to record and claim overtime. It is now being claimed one month in arrears and no retrospective unclaimed overtime has been allowed to accumulate.

The district health authority acknowledges some fault. The system itself—the clock, the muddle over what was overtime and all the rest of it—was faulty. The head of department gave the staff concerned a promise in writing that the claim should be met—he should not have done so, but he did.

Although the district health authority disputed the claim, it was on that basis that it was willing to meet the claimants half way. It discussed the matter with the central DHSS audit staff and then made payments to the four claimants of about 50 per cent. of the value of the claims. Three of the staff accepted the claims in full settlement. Mr. Baker took his cheque and cashed it in October 1986, but has since pressed for more money. I understand that he has consulted a solicitor as well as my hon. Friend, but no legal claim has been entered into court or received by the district health authority. I have in front of me Mr. Baker's letter of 4 November 1986, in which he sets out the details of his claim. He states that he feels that he has 324 hours of overtime owed to him over and above the claims that he made during the four years which were met.

Mr. Baker claims an hourly overtime rate of £5·16, and that is how he arrives at his calculation of £1,674. However, if the claim was met for 1981, it would be at £3·63 an hour, not £5·16. It would be £3·84 for 1982, £4·09 for 1983 and £4·98 for 1984. The claim, based on overtime rates in operation, would be £1,367, not £1,674. Mr. Baker has accepted already an ex gratia payment of £454·46, which excluded the taxation, superannuation and national insurance deductions that would have been payable. That is the normal way in which an ex gratia payment might be made. The sum is equivalent to a gross payment of about £700, which is slightly more than the corrected amount that is being claimed. That is the explanation of the figures that have been arrived at. Other employees have accepted and settled on the same basis as that which I have outlined and the health authority is not prepared to meet the claim for the sum that Mr. Baker considers he is due.

There are open to him various procedures. My hon. Friend will know that Mr. Baker cannot activate the local grievance procedure, because he is no longer an employee of the health authority. The Health Service Commissioner rejected Mr. Baker's bid because an extension of the Health Service Commissioner's remit was not appropriate. Health Service personnel and contractual matters are not within his purview. The General Whitley Council requires a health authority to operate a grievance procedure, but would not become directly involved. The Whitley Council for Professional and Technical Staff B, which negotiates pay and conditions for medical physics technicians, would not be involved in a local dispute of this kind.

It is not for us to advise Mr. Baker on how to go forward. He knows how to decide, no doubt with the advice of my hon. Friend, exactly what steps he wishes to take. For example, he can discuss the matter with his union —if he has one—or he can decide on whether it is a matter on which he feels he would like to seek further legal advice.

I regret to say that Ministers have no part whatever to play in this. The relationship is between the employee and the employer, which is the health authority, not Ministers. The basis of this is the National Health Service Act 1977, schedule 5(10) which says:

"an authority . . . may employ . . . such officers as it may determine at such remuneration and on such conditions of service as it may determine;".

Since Mr. Baker's letter of 4 November 1986, to which I have referred, there has been extensive correspondence between my hon. Friend and the authority, the Ombudsman and Ministers. I have also discussed the matter with Hillingdon district health authority officials, and I have read the entire large file on this case. The health authority has made from public funds—which are not in excessive supply—a payment which in the circumstances I consider reasonable.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

My hon. Friend's constituent persists in a claim that can only be described as inaccurate, unsupported and unrealistic. My hon. Friend has shown in this debate the outstanding characteristics for which his constituents elected him in June, but I cannot help him in the way he wishes. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept what I say in the spirit in which it is offered and that he will advise his constituent accordingly.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, read.
To be considered on Thursday 10 December at Seven o'clock.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 10 December.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 10 December at Seven o'clock.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 10 December.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 7 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Community Service Orders

1. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of community service orders, with particular regard to their effectiveness and appropriate application.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The community service order is a sentence which should provide a realistic alternative to custody for serious offenders. Its use has more than doubled since 1979. We welcome this and would like to see a further increase in the number of community service orders made.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is my hon. Friend aware that, valuable as community service orders are, if they are breached by the offender they must be backed up and enforced by penalties more severe than community service, not less severe, otherwise they will be treated as a soft option, and an avoidable soft option at that, rather than the sensible and effective punishment that they could be?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has put his finger right on the point, which it is critically important if we are to develop the use of community service orders, which are commonly held by Government and Opposition Members as well as by the general public to be effective and proper punishment. That means that anyone who is in breach of a community service order must be dealt with correctly by the courts. I assure my hon. Friend that I am conducting a survey on the imposition of community service orders and how they are carried out. If we find that there are any problems, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and I will not hesitate to act.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that, as the effectiveness of community service as a sentence has been proved over many years, the time has come to consider the length of community service orders so as to develop them as yet a further alternative to imprisonment and thus decrease the number of offenders sent to either youth custody or imprisonment?

Mr. Patten: Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence. May I take this opportunity to apologise to the hon. Gentleman, for I fear that he thought that in a winding-up speech three Fridays ago, in a debate on crime prevention, I slighted him.

Mr. Speaker: That is a bit wide, I think.

Mr. Patten: I wanted to do it publicly. It may have been wide, but I think it was handsome.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's question, I think that we could develop the community service order by increasing the periods, by introducing a greater element of reparation to the victim who has been offended against, and by having a concept of custody in the community rather than custody in prison. The order must be tough, demanding and respected by the victim and the general public.

Prisons

2. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those currently held in Her Majesty's prisons are on remand.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): On 31 October about 10,570 untried or convicted unsentenced prisoners were held in prison department establishments in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the delay in bringing accused people to trial is not only a major aggravation of overcrowding problems in prison but, by our own high standards, a serious infringement of human rights?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that having more than one fifth of the prison population unsentenced or unconvicted is wrong and is too high. That is why we are doing everything that we can to speed up the process of business in magistrates' courts, and that is why, in three police areas, I am using the power given me under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to introduce time limits on remand before the case is brought to trial.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Home Secretary agree that one of the few things that mitigate the rigours of remand is the entitlement of remand prisoners to food, drink and other comforts being brought into the remand prison by relatives? Will he tell the House that he has no plans whatever to reduce the privileges of remand prisoners, which are already few enough?

Mr. Hurd: We have, in our reply to the Select Committee's report, which we have published today—there is another question on the Order Paper—announced our intention to remove the special food privileges for remand prisoners. Clearly, whatever its justification at a time when food was scanty and bad, there is no justification for it today. It involves a danger of smuggling in drugs and other materials. It wastes a lot of prison officer time and its benefit to the remand population does not justify its continuance.

Mr. Butler: Will my right hon. Friend look closely at the whole concept of remand, as prisoners have an interest in spinning out their period on remand if they know that ultimately they will be convicted, because their privileges on remand are rather better than those on full imprisonment?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that not all the delays to which the question refers are the result of the prosecution. There are occasions when delay is caused by the defence.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Home Secretary accept that removing the rights of people held on remand is no answer to the problems of and pressure on the prison service? When does he expect that prisoners on remand will cease to be kept in police stations in London and the Home Counties?

Mr. Hurd: The decision that we have taken about food privileges for remand prisoners follows a recommendation to that effect from the Select Committee.

Mrs. Taylor: That is not an answer to all the problems.

Mr. Hurd: It is not an answer to all the problems. No single measure is ever an answer to all problems, but it certainly means that prison officers will be able to use their time to the greater benefit of the regime than when they are searching food brought in for remand prisoners. The hon. Lady is perfectly correct to focus again on the mischief of remand prisoners, or indeed of any prisoners, being held in police cells. The measures now being taken in the north-west will certainly help to relieve the situation there——

Mrs. Taylor: When?

Mr. Hurd: Shortly. But I am still concerned about the position in the south-east.

Police Manpower

3. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to review police manpower.

Mr. Hurd: At the end of September 1987 police manpower in England and Wales was at the record level of 123,740. I am constantly considering applications from police authorities for increases in their establishments. I hope to make an announcement before the end of this month about the increase which I am able to approve for the remainder of this financial year as part of the expansion programme that I announced in May 1986.

Mr. Watts: In considering the announcement that my right hon. Friend will be making later in the month, will he bear in mind that the Thames Valley police force, which serves my constituency and his, has the worst ratio of police to population of any authority anywhere in the country, that its establishment is inadequate on every measurement criterion, and that to achieve the average level of establishment for comparable provincial forces it would need an increase of 780 officers? In view of that, will he accept that anything less than full approval of the authority's application for an extra 200 officers this year would be viewed by my constituents, and I suggest also by his, as completely inadequate?

Mr. Hurd: The application from Thames Valley is one of the biggest that has been put forward, coming from a force which has had a bigger increase since 1979 than any other force outside London. That is not to deny the strength of the case that my hon. Friend has summarised. It clearly is a strong case. My hon. Friend will not expect me to play favourites simply because my constituency, like his, is in the area, but we are looking at the Thames Valley application alongside many others, for which many hon. Members will make strong arguments.

Mr. Hattersley: Why do the police forces have to wait so long for the Home Secretary to come to a decision about this? He will recall that the Thames Valley chief constable says that he is 700 men short of the realistic minimum number to police his area. He applied for the increase in June. Why is he still waiting for an answer?

Mr. Hurd: Because we look at the applications several times a year, and I have to fit that into the programme of expansions that I announced in May 1986. The programme has already brought about a further increase of 1,500 in police strength in the first six months of this year. Following a long period of neglect, we are continuing the programme of my two predecessors for a steady expansion in the police forces of England and Wales, which have had a bigger share of the increase than any

other part of the public sector, thus giving the priority which we said that we would give, and which the right hon. Gentleman and his Government sadly neglected.

Mr. Mates: While our record is second to none in the increased resources that we have given to the police authorities, and while some police authorities may indeed still need extra resources, are we not entitled, now that we have put the whole policing operation in this country on to a higher footing, to look to the police forces to examine their own systems of management and give us better value for money than they may have given in the past?

Mr. Hurd: That is indeed very important. One of the first questions that we ask when we receive an application from a force is whether that force is "civilianising"—using civilians behind desks and computers, at about half the cost of a professional police officer. In London, for example, the programme of civilianisation now under way, with 600 new civilians to be recruited, will lead to the release of 400 police officers to professional duties on the beat.

Prisons (Crown Immunity)

4. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to remove the Crown immunity of Her Majesty's prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are not persuaded that there is anything to be gained from the removal of Crown immunity from prison establishments, as we are satisfied that the present arrangements are effective in setting and monitoring the standards required by legislation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Minister will no doubt recall the outbreak of salmonella at Wakefield prison in August this year. I understand that his Department has received a copy of the document resulting from the environmental health officers' investigation into the outbreak. May I ask for his comments on paragraph 5.6, which states:

"In the absence of Crown immunity there is no doubt that a failure to take immediate action to remedy the many contraventions of the Food Hygiene General Regulations 1970 would result in recommendation that legal proceedings"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please paraphrase rather than reading?

Mr. Hinchliffe: Will we have to wait for another Stanley Royd disaster before we get some action?

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the outbreak last August. However, if the hon. Gentleman reads the whole report—as I am sure he has, and I appreciate his concern for the welfare of people in his constituency—he will see that nowhere in the report do the environmental health officers suggest that the outbreak of salmonella poisoning was caused by any problems with food preparation in the kitchens at that prison. Other remedial suggestions were put forward and have been taken account of by prison authorities. The prison was inspected independently by our environmental health officers on 25 November.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend recall that it was the present Government who removed Crown immunity from National Health Service hospitals, and that the principle has therefore been established? Has it not proved satisfactory and worked in the interests of the service? Will he reflect on what he has said and perhaps consider the question again?

Mr. Patten: I always reflect on what my hon. Friend says. I can only say that all the prison service environmental health officers are trained to the same level as local authority environmental health officers, and inspections are carried out to exactly the same high standard. It does not strike me that there is much difference between a service conducted by a group of long-established people who have given good service to the prison department, and one conducted by others who happen to be in a local authority.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that both Mr. Jim Kay, of the Prison Officers Association, and I were incredulous last week when Lord Caithness told us that conditions in British prisons, despite Crown immunity, were up to standard in regard to food hygiene, health and safety? Would he care to go on record as saying that that is the official Home Office position?

Mr. Patten: My noble Friend Lord Caithness had the opportunity last week to see the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. They were told quite clearly that the Home Office view is that to provide food to a reasonable standard is a very important part of providing a good prison regime. That is what the Home Office consistently tries to do, and that includes and involves all related environmental health issues.

Television Violence

5. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his recent discussions with members of the broadcasting authorities to discuss violence in television.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): At a meeting on 29 September the chairmen of the BBC and the IBA made it clear to my right hon. Friend that the broadcasting authorities share the public concern on this issue and are taking further action to tighten up the enforcement of programme standards. This includes a more selective approach to material produced abroad and improved arrangements for checking and reviewing programmes.

Mr. Baker: Will my hon. Friend state from the Dispatch Box the absolutely unequivocal truth about the connection between what people see on television and how they behave, because that is now clearly established? Is my hon. Friend aware that many of the violent television programmes are of foreign, and in particular United States, origin? Will he bring that fact to the attention of the IBA and the BBC?

Mr. Renton: Personally, I have a good deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend's point. It was for that reason that my right hon. Friend recently announced the setting up of the Broadcasting Standards Council. It will not be a regulatory body, but it could conduct research into precisely that point—the connection between violence shown on the television screen and violence in the real world outside.

Mr. Turner: In the Chancellor's Autumn Statement he said that there would be substantial additional resources for the police. I wonder whether the Home Secretary could tell me when we may see——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking about the broadcasting authorities, which is the subject of Question 5?

Mr. Gale: When my hon. Friend met the broadcasting authorities, was he able to suggest to them that if the proceedings of this House were to be televised, those who are charged with the duty of curbing violence on television would face an even more impossible task than that which they so manifestly fail to carry out already?

Mr. Renton: I admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity. He is an expert on broadcasting, and doubtless he will make that point in any future debate on televising the proceedings of the House.

Mr. Corbett: I suspect that the House will want to take this matter more seriously than does the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). Does the Minister agree that it would be quite proper to request the BBC to change its decision to start showing the three-part series "The Marksman", which was withdrawn immediately after the violence at Hungerford? The pain and distress that would be caused by that film, which I understand concerns a character who goes round blowing people apart in order to get what he considers to be vengeance, would hit immediately those families in Hungerford and elsewhere who have been involved in shooting incidents.

Mr. Renton: I understand very clearly what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He will appreciate that it is not the job of Ministers to second-guess the decisions of the broadcasting authorities with regard to the interpretation of their statutory obligations regarding programming, but I have no doubt that the broadcasting authorities will bear very carefully in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman has just made.

Obscene Publications Act

6. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to amend the Obscene Publications Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We shall ask Parliament, as promised in our manifesto, to remove from the Obscene Publications Act 1959 the exemption for broadcasting.

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend for his response. Is he aware that there is widespread concern in the country that at the moment the Obscene Publications Act applies only to the written word? Should not urgent consideration be given to extending it to the visual media, particularly bearing in mind the amount of violence on television, from which many criminals get their ideas, since violent crime is essentially imitative?

Mr. Renton: I should make the point to my hon. Friend that the Obscene Publications Act is by no means a dead letter. Between 1980 and 1986 there were nearly 1,800 convictions for offences under the Act. We intend to remove the broadcasting exemption and incorporate it into the Broadcasting Bill, which we shall bring before Parliament as soon as we can. Unfortunately, that will not be during this Session but we shall do it as soon as we can.

Mr. Cryer: When the Minister produces this exemption, will he bear in mind the number of occasions when the Prime Minister appears on television supporting the building of Trident at a cost of £11 billion, which involves a threat of mass extermination of millions of men, women and children——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman might have been more in order on the last question, not on this one.

Mr. Cryer: Murder is obscene.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what the rules are.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman's remarks remind us that the extreme Left is alive and kicking. It is doubtless that sort of remark that the broadcasting authorities will have to think about when deciding about the televising of Parliament.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Is my hon. Friend aware that his answer to the main question about the extension of the Obscene Publications Act will be welcomed in my constituency, where it is considered essential? When my hon. Friend meets representatives of the BBC and IBA, will he remind them that Mr. Michael Grade — who seems to straddle both organisations — was recently converted to the extension of the Obscence Publications Act, and will he recommend that the authorities should support what my right hon. Friend is doing in the House?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for that support. I have noted what he said about the conversion of Mr. Michael Grade to this point of view. There is a general wish among Conservative Members to remove the exemption for broadcasting authorities from the Obscene Publications Act as soon as we can.

Prisons

7. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has completed his consideration of the third report of the Home Affairs Committee on the state and use of prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's reply is published today.

Mr. Archer: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for his rapid response to my question. For the benefit of those who have not yet read it, and in the interests of prisoners, staff and potential victims of future crime, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is pointless building more prisons without doing something about the conditions of existing ones? Bearing in mind that the Committee recommend the phasing out of Crown immunity, and bearing in mind also the earlier answer of the Minister of State today, is it not an appalling contribution to the rule of law that the Government should wish to evade responsibility for legal requirements?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has already answered the point about Crown immunity. We are interested in making progress, not only to multiply prison places — I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman — but in particular to introduce modern sanitation where there is none today. We are pressing ahead with that and we have had substantial sums of money from the Treasury for that purpose. It is not a whit advanced by removing Crown immunity or by a minimum code of standards.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Is my right hon. Friend aware that prison officers' representatives and management at

Northeye prison welcome the principle of Fresh Start, but say that it cannot properly be put into practice until the agreed staffing levels are met?

Mr. Hurd: We are recruiting a substantial number of extra prison staff this year—750—to meet the Fresh Start reforms. Fresh Start involves each establishment working out new and more sensible ways of doing its job. That requires an adjustment and is bound to produce a certain amount of controversy. We are currently evaluating manpower requirements.

Nazi War Crimes

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on what action he intends to take in regard to those living in the United Kingdom who are alleged to have committed Nazi crimes in the last war.

Mr. Hurd: We are urgently considering the policy and legal implications of documents provided by the Simon Wiesenthal centre. I hope to be able to announce our conclusions soon.

Mr. Winnick: I appreciate what the Home Secretary has just said, but would it not be quite wrong if those held responsible for the most monstrous Nazi war crimes were allowed to get away scot-free because they happened to be living in the United Kingdom? Therefore, is not the real choice for the Government that of changing the law on extradition, as we have been urging on the Irish Government on another matter, or allowing legal proceedings to take place in this country?

Mr. Hurd: The truth is that we have no jurisdiction as things stand over crimes, however serious, committed overseas by individuals who were not British citizens at that time, nor is there, under present arrangements or likely arrangements, a possibility of extradition; nor can there be any thorough further investigation without jurisdiction. We have to decide whether we should assert jurisdiction by a change in the law, and if so how that should be defined. That is far from easy. The ethical and legal considerations are very serious and do not all point in the same way. We are considering how to proceed.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, however much we detest the perpetrators of war crimes, we should not institute extraordinary legal changes to enable mere allegations to be pursued?

Mr. Hurd: The difficulty is that it is hard to pursue beyond the stage of mere allegations when there is no jurisdiction. There is certainly no question of creating crimes or offences retrospectively. It is a question of the width of our jurisdiction over crimes that are recognised by everyone as crimes.

Mr. Flannery: When massive evidence is accruing about crimes committed during the war as in the case of Gecas in Edinburgh, will we tolerate a situation where a trial needs to take place to let us all know whether the crimes have been committed, or will we leave a man like that and apparently 16 others in this country and do nothing about them after all that we think they have done?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman clearly has not listened to the exchanges over the past two minutes. I have set out the considerations and the options that we are considering.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend please be extremely wary on this issue and take note of the fact that the supporters of this particular proposal are motivated, not by justice, but by the demands of propaganda? Will he also be aware of the fact that many of his hon. Friends would be extremely concerned if he were to pursue such legislation, which would, in effect, be retrospective?

Mr. Hurd: The question is how we deal with extremely serious allegations. I do not want to repeat myself, in case I get the balance slightly different, but I have set out deliberately all the considerations. We must be very cautious about this, because the considerations either way are very serious. As soon as we have reached a conclusion we shall let the House know.

Mr. Alex Carlile: If the Home Secretary announces jurisdictional changes in due course, will he also consider the necessity of announcing specific funds so that proper police investigations can be carried out into the allegations that have been made?

Mr. Hurd: Any change would certainly produce costs. There is no doubt about that. I do not believe that the hon. and learned Gentleman or anyone else would think that that consideration should be decisive.

Autocrime

9. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the degree to which autocrime features in the overall crime statistics; and what steps his Department is taking to combat this problem.

Mr. John Patten: Thefts of and from vehicles represent some 25 per cent. of all recorded offences. Most car crime is either avoidable or preventable. We have made determined efforts to get that message across to motorists and manufacturers. Last week the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention decided to establish a widely representative working group on car crime which will review the subject and produce recommendations before this time next year.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that response. Does he recall that autocrime is now one of the fastest growing crimes in this country, if not the fastest? Is he further aware of the amount of police time currently spent investigating those crimes? Will he therefore contact again the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in an endeavour to persuade it to make cars and vehicles generally more secure than is currently the case? Will he also have discussions with the insurers to persuade them to give lower premiums to car owners who adequately protect their vehicles?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is quite right. It seems to be a British disease not to lock cars when leaving them. About 20 per cent. of stolen cars seem to be left unlocked by motorists. That means that the police spend up to 1 million man hours a year investigating car-related crime, and that time could be spent investigating more serious crimes.

It is critically important that people take more responsibility for the prevention of car crime. To say that is not to give a nannying message. That is an authentically Conservative message. We want people to take responsibility over education, housing and crime. Yes, I

will indeed continue my discussions with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and the Association of British Insurers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Now that Thames Valley police have admitted that they have one of the highest rates of reported crime per officer in the whole of the south of England, and now that the Minister himself has admitted that there has been a long period of neglect, is it not time that the Home Secretary responded positively to the demands for the 700 additional policemen needed to deal with crimes in the Thames Valley area? Is not Ministers' indifference to those demands disgraceful in the context of escalating crime in the Thames valley?

Mr. Patten: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is not aware —he cannot have been listening carefully enough—that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was referring to the long and sustained period of neglect of the police by the last Labour Administration. Here are some of the guilty men on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Dickens: Given the mobility of the criminal today, what new initiatives is the Home Office taking to ensure that women are free to walk without fear of abuse and rape—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dickens: What will be done to ensure that women can walk freely—*[Interruption.]*—without——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not persist when I rise. This question is about autocrime.

Firearms

11. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the present legal restrictions on the possession and use of firearms; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): We have received some 900 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, and over 4,500 from members of the public, including secretaries of rifle and pistol clubs. We have also received correspondence from shooting organisations, police and local authority representatives and a number of other bodies with an interest in the review of firearms controls. Although many, but not all, shooting interests oppose some of the proposals that we have announced, they seem otherwise to have been well received generally.

Mr. McAllion: Yesterday the Home Secretary told the House that he saw no reason for clamping down on the sale of legitimate items by mail order. Will the Minister tell the House which potentially lethal weapons he thinks can be legitimately sold by mail order and what steps the Government intend to take to ensure that such weapons do not find their way into the hands of individuals who may cause a threat to public order?

Mr. Hogg: The important thing is to get the controls themselves right, and that we have done. Mail order is simply a technique for selling, and there is no particular reason for tackling a particular technique.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that since the White Paper was published yesterday many Norfolk farmers and legitimate sportsmen have contacted me to express their concern about the legitimate use of guns in their sport? Will the Minister undertake that their sporting freedom will not be impaired?

Mr. Hogg: We have very much in mind the legitimate interests of the shooting community. That is why we introduced the checks. When we come to consider the meaning of "good reason" in the context of shotgun control, we shall give such guidance as will protect the legitimate interests of my hon. Friend's constituents.

Mr. William Ross: On the basis of the number of legally held guns and stolen legally held guns used to commit murders in the past few years, how many lives does the Minister expect his proposals to save, and on what authority does he base any such estimate?

Mr. Hogg: We are in the business of reducing risk. That is what this country expects of us.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that all those who use guns legally will be delighted with the way in which our right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has struck such an excellent balance on these difficult proposals? Does he agree that it is very much his Department's duty to monitor the proposals carefully—in particular their effect on gun clubs?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The answer is yes, Sir.

Mr. Hattersley: On 26 October the hon. Gentleman expressly ruled out the application of the good reason criteria to shotguns. Is that not now Government policy?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman was not listening on 26 October. I expressly ruled out section 1 control. The present proposals are different.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend explain why he has decided to omit from his review the function of proof houses? Will he explain why proof houses, which were successfully privatised in the 17th century, and, to the mystery of gunmakers, are still relevant to the debate, should be excluded from any kind of control, when every gun in the country has to be proofed in one of the two houses in Birmingham and London?

Mr. Hogg: For present purposes we are looking at the Firearms Act 1968. My hon. Friend has raised an interesting point about proof houses, and I look forward to discussing the matter with him.

Shoplifting

12. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been charged with and convicted of shoplifting during the most recent 12 months for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986, 48,188 men and 25,157 women were proceeded against for theft from shops, and 42,142 men and 22,092 women were found guilty of such an offence.

Mr. Janner: Bearing in mind that many of those who were found guilty had pleaded guilty and that, of those who pleaded innocent, a majority were acquitted, will the Minister accept that there is a great risk of innocent people in self-service stores being prosecuted for shoplifting through mere forgetfulness and carelessness? As such a

risk is at its height during the present Christmas shopping period, will he warn shoppers to take great care so that they do not spend Christmas in fear? Will he also advise those who are responsible for prosecuting to be especially careful about how they deal with the elderly and the ill in such matters?

Mr. Patten: I appreciate the hon. and learned Gentleman's long-standing interest in the subject. Theft is theft. If people are found guilty of theft, they must be punished for theft. People can be found guilty only if the prosecution is able to prove dishonesty. The Attorney-General's guidelines to the police tell them how to handle elderly, confused or forgetful people.

Risley Remand Centre

13. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will hold an inquiry into the management of Risley remand centre in the light of recent deaths at the centre.

Mr. John Patten: No, but as I said in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 1 December, Risley is to be inspected next year by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons, and we shall be studying his report with particular care. Each such incident is carefully analysed to see whether there are any lessons to be learnt.

Mr. Hoyle: Is the Minister aware that the deaths of Audrey Bergman, James Armstrong and Evan Evans took place in a short period between 25 July and 27 August? Does he know that all of them were depressed and that the two male prisoners had obviously tried earlier to take their lives? Will he ask his colleague the Secretary of State to agree to an early meeting with me and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), who has a constituency interest, so that we may express in more depth the case for a public inquiry? Such a public inquiry would help to relieve the parents'suffering and also help to relieve public disquiet over Risley.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to him in the last day or so offering a meeting between my noble Friend Lord Caithness, who is the Minister with responsibility for prisons, and himself and the hon. Member for Caernarfon.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that, a month before his death, Evan Evans had written to Caernarfon saying that he intended to take his own life? Is he further aware that his girl friend had written to prison authorities telling them of the danger of suicide, and that they lost the letter? In the circumstances, surely there should be a public inquiry as a matter of urgency, so that there will be no further incidents of that sort? Will he pass on the message to his right hon. Friend about the meeting with the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and myself? The matter must be pursued at the highest level.

Mr. Patten: These matters can be looked into when the hon. Gentlemen call on my noble Friend Lord Caithness to discuss the issue. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that guidelines on the prevention of suicide in prisons and remand centres were laid down only in March this year by the prison department.

Police (Nottinghamshire)

14. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reach a decision on the applications he has received from Nottinghamshire police authority regarding the strengthening of the county constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend expects to reach a decision before the end of the month.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that earlier his hon. Friend the Minister of State made certain allegations about the decline of the police service under the previous Labour Government? Will he support Nottinghamshire county council, which is a Labour-controlled county council, in its plea for more police officers so that we can reduce the 35 per cent. increase in crime in Nottingham that has taken place under the law and order Government since 1979?

Mr. Hogg: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, he will be glad to know that since 1979 the total manpower available to the police service has increased by 19,000. On the second part of his question, he will also be glad to know that since 1979 the constabulary to which he has referred has had an increase of 114 in terms of new establishment.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be departing later today for Copenhagen to attend the European Council.

Mr. Rooker: Is the Prime Minister aware that Ministers have admitted that, on the introduction of the poll tax in 1990, slightly more households will lose than will gain, but that people living in the gainer households number 14·2 million, whereas adults living in loser households number 18·8 million in England alone? Where is the majority support for that idea? Is it in the Cabinet of gainers, or in the country of losers?

The Prime Minister: As a way of paying for local government the community charge will expand the base of payment to people who do not pay at present, but who we feel should contribute to paying for local government when they benefit enormously from the services that local government provides. We all pay income tax and VAT —*[Interruption.]* Most people pay income tax, but not all. All pay value added tax, and some pay rates as well, but rates have far too narrow a base.

Mr. Burns: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend ensure that if Post Office workers go on strike the Government will immediately suspend the Post Office's monopoly in order to avoid suffering to millions of people in the build-up to Christmas, the time of good will?

The Prime Minister: If need be, we shall suspend the monopoly of the Post Office. I understand that a meeting

is continuing this afternoon between the unions and management. I hope that they will reach a sensible settlement, because to attempt to go on strike at this time of the year would be totally and utterly cruel to business, which relies on the postal service at this time of the year, and totally heartless to all the people who make contact with one another by Christmas cards and presents.

Mr. Kinnock: Before the pay review body considers nurses' pay and the important question of regrading, and in view of the serious shortages in many of the specialties of nursing, will the Prime Minister now give an undertaking that, this time, the Government will fund the whole of the nurses' pay award and any costs that result from regrading?

The Prime Minister: The restructuring proposals are not yet ready to go to the review body. If they are agreed they will, of course, go to the review body, which did not exist under the previous Labour Government. When the proposals come from the review body, we shall consider them in the usual way and consider also the financial arrangements for any proposals that may be made. In the meantime, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, next year in the United Kingdom there will be an increase in resources of about £1·1 billion for the National Health Service.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the scale of anxiety and indeed of the crisis in the supply of nurses in many areas, and in view of the fact that the health authorities simply do not have the money to fund a regrading or any significant award, will the Prime Minister take the unusual step this year of giving guidance to that pay body and ensuring that when it does make an award there really is money to pay the nurses? Does she not realise that it would be both stupid and cruel to ask the health authorities to pay the nurses' award out of cuts and closures in hospitals wards?

The Prime Minister: I will prejudge neither the evidence to the review body nor what it says as a consequence. We stand very much on our record on the Health Service and the 64,000 more nurses that we now have. In the right hon. Gentleman's own constituency the increase in Health Service funding was 6 per cent. in real terms over the whole period of the last Labour Government, whereas it has risen by 20 per cent. under us. So Gwent will be very pleased.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister not realise yet that neither nurses nor patients are interested in the past, but are interested in the future? *[Interruption.]* The jeering from the Tory Benches is only further evidence of the fact that, by going private, they manifest total ignorance of what the nurses and patients feel. Will the Prime Minister tell us whether the awards are to be funded properly, or are to be paid for out of further closures?

The Prime Minister: I have already answered the right hon. Gentleman. The trouble is that he does not listen. But let me say that the last thing that nurses want is to be back under a Labour Government, to have their pay cut.

Mr. Gale: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to write to the Leader of the Opposition and invite him, on behalf of his constituents, to seek to ensure that in the forthcoming contest for the leadership of the miner's union the vote is carried out—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a part of the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Westland

Q2. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will arrange for the early release of non-classified records in relation to the Westland affair.

The Prime Minister: No. All records relating to Westland will be dealt with in the normal way in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Acts.

Mr. Dalyell: Did Mr. Charles Powell really fail to inform his Prime Minister of the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

The Prime Minister: As I have told the House and the hon. Gentleman on many occasions, I have nothing to add to the many statements and speeches that I have made in detail on this whole matter. Nothing to add.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. Friend think that there is any relationship between the obsessions of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) with the Westland affair, the Belgrano and various other matters, and the fact that, of all the Labour candidates in Scotland at the general election, he had one of the worst results?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with this question, which is about the Westland affair.

Mr. John Morris: When the Prime Minister set up the inquiry, did she know that it was an official leak?

The Prime Minister: I have already said that I have nothing further to add to the detailed statements and speeches which have gone into great detail and which have been given to the House. There is nothing further to add to those statements.

Mr. Warren: Is my right hon. Friend aware that when evidence on Westland was given to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I had the honour to be Chairman at the time, there was never at any time any qualification about the standard of the information given, nor did we find any withheld?

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: Will the Prime Minister find time today to explain her reasons for believing that, under electricity privatisation, the free market should not be allowed to decide whether a new generation of nuclear power stations would be a viable proposition?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that point has already been dealt with in extenso by the Sizewell inquiry. As well as being a viable proposition, other matters are also involved. Obviously one wants electricity power stations generated on different bases, some from coal, some from gas, some from oil and some from nuclear power. That is much the wisest course of action.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that, today, she takes with her to Copenhagen the good wishes of everyone on the Conservative Benches? It is crucial for the interests of farming communities as well as taxpayers and consumers that some sense is brought to the European Community budget.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We shall be going to Copenhagen for what will undoubtedly be a very difficult meeting, but it is vital that we address, and attempt to solve, with determination, the question of surplus agricultural products, the question of sound financial discipline and, of course, that we maintain our Fontainebleau abatement, which has served this country very well.

Answers to Questions

Q4. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will take steps to seek to alter the current practice of Ministers at Question Time reading from prepared briefs.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend — the hon. Gentleman—sorry.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is no.

Mr. Allen: The people who listen on the radio to Prime Minister's Question Time will not be aware that the Prime Minister does not answer questions off the cuff, but reads her answers from a prepared brief. Is that because the Prime Minister does not have the wit to answer the questions, or is it because she has no confidence in her policies?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly.

Mr. Allen: Is the reason the Prime Minister does not want television cameras in this Chamber that people would see the Prime Minister and Prime Minister's Question Time for the sham that they both are?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman has referred to broadcasting, I hope that people will also have the wit to know that one does not have a clue what will come out from the other side at all and I hope — *[Interruption.]* I do not know if anything of any value will come out from the other side, but just in case there should be anything of value one does take a great deal of trouble to try to provide statistics and to provide the facts. It is the facts that Opposition Members cannot stand. The reason why I do not want television is that I am afraid that people would see too much of what the other side are really like, and that would not enhance the reputation of this House.

Engagements

Q5. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to congratulate our right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the accord that he announced yesterday on the subject of Gibraltar? That accord does not involve any loss of sovereignty and will lead to better relationships with Spain and cheaper air fares throughout Europe.

The Prime Minister: Yes, congratulations are very much in order to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on negotiating this agreement, which will be of great benefit to Europe in terms of cheaper air fares and air liberalisation. That accord has been agreed without any derogation from the sovereignty of Gibraltar and gives the Gibraltarians the possibility of joining that agreement if they wish to do so.

Mr. William Ross: Does the Prime Minister agree that the decision of the Government of the Irish Republic to refer extradition applications from the United Kingdom to their Attorney-General will make extradition from the Irish Republic to the United Kingdom an extremely political act? Does the Prime Minister further agree that it allows the Government of the Irish Republic to increase pressure for judicial change in the United Kingdom in exchange for such extraditions? During her pleasant flight this afternoon, will the Prime Minister reflect that such a power would not be created by the Irish Government if it was not their intention to use it?

The Prime Minister: On the last occasion that I answered from the Dispatch Box I answered a question about the extradition arrangements. The old extradition arrangements that we had were excellent and fair. Neither side looked through the warrant. They accepted the warrant and the fact that when a warrant was presented there was evidence and intention to prosecute. I believe that the arrangements now — the measures that have recently gone through the Dail in the Republic—are a step backwards, because they undo that most excellent arrangement. I made it clear that extradition will be more difficult. I see no reason why we, on our side, should ever attempt to make extradition more difficult. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has done everything possible, in concert with Europe, to make extradition easier and to ensure that the people against whom there are serious charges are extradited to the country that requires them so that they can be properly and fully tried.

Q6. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: In preparing her efforts to ensure common sense in the Common Market at Copenhagen—*[Interruption.]*—whatever the Opposition may think, my right hon. Friend has the support of the whole country—will she draw encouragement, not only from the backing of public opinion here, but from the support given by the West German people, as shown in a recent public opinion poll?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend and of colleagues. It is vital that we tackle the issue of agricultural surpluses in the way proposed by the Commission—by stabilisers for each and every product. The worst thing that could happen would be a message from the European Council that, once again, we had run away from the issue instead of tackling it.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I will be resolute in our approach to the Council meeting and in our performance at it.

BCal-SAS (Negotiations)

3.31 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's policy in the light of the latest developments in the negotiations between British Caledonian Airways and SAS.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): The Government's policy remains as set out in the 1984 airline competition policy White Paper.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that the House will be grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that detailed answer. Could I ask him, if the matter of shareholding in British Caledonian is the problem, what percentage of SAS shareholding he would find acceptable—20 per cent., 25 per cent. or any other figure up to 30 per cent.? What percentage of British Airways shares were sold on foreign stock exchanges at the time the airline was unwisely privatised? What percentage of BA shares are currently held by non-British individuals and institutions?

Finally, can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that any final decision on this matter will be made in the interests of air travellers and those employed in the industry, and will not be based on the apparently endless ambition and influence of Lord King, or the rambling xenophobia of his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)?

Mr. Channon: It is not for me to say what the position is in relation to an exact shareholding. The Civil Aviation Authority has certain duties under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to inform me that, in its view, an airline is no longer under effective United Kingdom control. It cannot do that until a proposition has been made, but it can give informal guidance. It has given informal guidance that, in its view, a proposal that has so far been put forward between SAS and BCal would amount to the airline no longer being under United Kingdom control. Under the circumstances, if the CAA makes such a recommendation, I have the power under the Act to revoke or to fail to revoke licences that may exist. I cannot take a final decision about that matter; I can only say — it is strongly in the public interest that I should do so—what I am minded to do. I have said that, in view of the CAA pronouncement, I would be minded to revoke the licences should a merger take place on those terms.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a very wide welcome for the way in which this matter has been handled? It will be particularly welcome that there has not been a further reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which would cause a further month's delay and uncertainty that BCal could not withstand. Equally, there will be a wide welcome for the fact that my right hon. Friend has made it clear that we would not tolerate ownership or control by a foreign airline of a British flag carrier. Has my right hon. Friend been told whether the Opposition are in favour of the nationalisation by the Scandinavians of a British private enterprise airline?

Mr. Channon: It is extremely difficult to discover what, if anything, the Opposition policy is on this matter. The only indication that I can give my right hon. Friend is that at Question Time on Monday, the official Opposition spokesman seemed on the whole to be criticising us for allowing the talks between BCal and SAS to go on. I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for his question. It is a serious matter if a British scheduled airline passes under foreign control. One of the reasons why it would be serious is that it would be open to foreign Governments who were not satisfied that substantial ownership of an airline was in British hands to refuse to accept its designation for the services covered by agreements. That would have widespread repercussions.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Would the Secretary of State clarify two points? Will he make it clear that there is a difference between control of a British airline and a minority stake in it, which is what is proposed by SAS? Will he confirm, contrary to what the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) says, that SAS is not wholly owned by the three Governments in Scandinavia, but is a private-public mixed enterprise in the same way that BP used to be in this country? Will he accept that the right hon. Member for Chingford is being totally consistent in attacking his successor at the Department of Trade and Industry because it was the right hon. Gentleman in 1984 who removed the doctrine of the public interest as the basis of merger policy and who now, in talking about pillage by the Vikings, is missing out only the accusation of rape?

Mr. Channon: I do not agree with any of the right hon. Gentleman's points about the definition, or with his reference to my right hon. Friend attacking his successor. As one of my right hon. Friend's successors, I can say that he has never attacked me yet—*[Laughter.]*—and I hope that he will not. I intend to take good care that he does not. The right hon. Gentleman raised the serious matter of control of a United Kingdom airline and asked about the definition of effective control. That is not a matter for me; it is a matter for the CAA. I have no powers to act unless the CAA reports to me that in its view effective control of a United Kingdom airline has passed out of United Kingdom hands. Then and only then do I have power to act. The points raised by the right hon. Gentleman about the definition of control are entirely matters for the CAA and not for me.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on the excellent way in which his Department and the CAA have handled this very difficult matter? Will he confirm that it would be a very serious matter for British aviation if certain air service agreements were to be lost because British Caledonian had lost its United Kingdom interests?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course the hypothetical situation in which a merger involving BCal took place and in which it was decided that effective control had passed out of British hands, could well be to the detriment of British civil aviation interests. The Government could well be obliged to designate another airline in BCal's place or to make concessions that would not have been necessary if the question of foreign control had not arisen. It is fair to make that clear.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What advice should I give to constituents who are employed by British Caledonian in the Edinburgh area about their employment prospects? What is the percentage of foreign ownership in

British Airways? In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), are we sure that the Secretary of State for Transport was also representing the views of his right hon. Friend in the other place, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. Channon: On the latter point, I can give the hon. Gentleman a categorical assurance that that is indeed the case. My right hon. Friend's powers and my powers are entirely different. He acts under certain powers; I act under the powers in the Civil Aviation Act 1982. As to the employment prospects or, indeed, any of the other very important considerations that the parties concerned in this affair have to decide, it is for the CAA to make the best judgment of those matters rather than for me to comment at this stage.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): May I fully endorse the observations of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and also express the hope that the philosophy underlying them will in future be applied by my right hon. Friend's Department to many other aspects of British commercial life?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I shall bear his advice in mind.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): In all this will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the wings of the Airbus are made in my constituency by 4,000 British Aerospace workers? In any merger, what will be the fate of the order for Airbus by British Caledonian?

Mr. Channon: It must be a matter for British Caledonian. It is not one that I can answer this afternoon, nor do I know what the outcome of the eventual negotiations will be. If a situation arose — this is hypothetical—in which a large British scheduled airline fell under the control of people who were not British nationals, and if the services then came into question, that would have serious consequences for employment as well.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Can my right hon. Friend not make it clear that, as I understand it, it is Government policy to try to maintain a competitive second force airline in the United Kingdom? Is it not also clear that, under the proposed partnership with SAS, effective management and control could remain within the United Kingdom, at the same time retaining an effective competition? Is that not the crucial point? Can my right hon. Friend use his good offices to ensure that the shareholders can make a decision free of prejudice and free of the possibility of losing any vital routes?

Mr. Channon: As I tried to explain to the House, it is for the CAA at this stage only to give an informal indication, as it was asked to do — it cannot make a decision — as to whether or not a proposed merger would result in effective control passing out of British hands. It was the CAA's view that effective control would pass out of United Kingdom hands. Under the circumstances, I had to consider what I would do. Therefore, I told the airline and the House that I would be minded to direct revocation of the licences. I have no locus in deciding whether or not effective control passes. That is for the CAA, which will have to consider any representations made to it.

As to the whole question of airline competition policy, obviously we are anxious to encourage a competitive multi-airline industry with a variety of airlines serving the needs of travellers, to ensure adequate safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour by airlines and to ensure that British airlines can compete effectively against foreign competitors.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Minister give a guarantee that in any newly constructed company there will be safeguards against Tory MPs becoming directors, despite any bullying that might come from the direction of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that civil air transport policy in Europe has for far too long been anti-competitive, too protective, illiberal and nationalistic? Does he agree that it would be good to get transnational mergers to break up some of the cosy cartels which have been so prejudicial to the interests of the travelling public?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that a great deal needs to be done to improve airline competition in Europe and, indeed, in the world in general. We may take some modest steps on that early next week at the Community Transport Council when I hope that we will adopt the aviation package that will be before us. In this case I had to decide whether I should give an indication about my powers when the CAA itself had given such an indication. I am sure that I was right to do so.

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Kenneth Clarke.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Not at this stage.

Mr. Marlow: I wish to raise a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: No, the hon. Gentleman knows that I do not take points of order until the proper time.

British Steel Corporation (Privatisation)

3.40 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the British Steel Corporation. The corporation today announced its half-year results for 1987-88. These show a bottom line profit of £190 million. This compares to £178 million profit for the whole of 1986-87. This is an impressive improvement in the corporation's performance and I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating the corporation and all its employees on such an impressive achievement.

As the House is aware, the Government are committed to returning successful state industries such as steel to the private sector as soon as practicable. It is quite apparent that the British Steel Corporation has now reached the stage where it would benefit from a return to a fully commercial environment. I am therefore pleased to announce that I am setting in hand the work necessary to privatise the corporation as soon as possible, subject to market conditions. Legislation will be required to turn the corporation into a private company. This will be introduced later in the current Session.

In accordance with the previous commitments given by the Government, the corporation will continue with five integrated plants until August 1988. I have been reviewing this with the corporation in the light of the current market position, which will require steel making at all five plants for a number of years. Scottish Members will be pleased to hear that the corporation will be putting out a statement today making clear that, subject to market conditions, there will continue to be a commercial requirement for steel making at Ravenscraig for at least the next seven years.

The corporation also expects that, again subject to commercial considerations, there will be a similar requirement for plate rolling at Dalzell. This therefore gives assurance to Ravenscraig's iron and steel-making facilities for a period much longer than the three-year commitments that the Government have been able to give in each of the two previous reviews in 1982 and 1985. The corporation has also indicated that, even if it should wish at some stage, because of market conditions, to close its steel-making facilities in Ravenscraig it would consider, on a commercial basis, any wholly private sector offer for those facilities as an alternative to closure.

There is clear surplus capacity in the British Steel Corporation, as throughout Europe, in hot strip. BSC's strip mills are currently running at below 70 per cent. of their potential capacity, which is among the lowest level of utilisation of strip mills anywhere in Europe. However, having reviewed the situation thoroughly, the Corporation has decided on commercial grounds that all their present mills, including the Ravenscraig mill, will continue to operate at least until 1989.

The Government's consistent aim has been to achieve a strong competitive British steel industry capable of performing well against international competition. This is in the best interests of the work force of British steel, of all its customers and in particular of steel users in the rest of British industry. The British Steel Corporation has already achieved a quite remarkable recovery and is now one of the most successful steel makers in western Europe. I believe that early privatisation and full commercial freedom will enable the company and its work force to be best placed to go on to further achievements and to secure a firmly based competitive industry with a long-term future.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a day when the British Steel Corporation and its work force deserve genuine congratulation, has the Minister not rewarded them instead with a statement which quite unnecessarily places their future in jeopardy? Does he not recognise that British Steel's success has been achieved under public ownership? Indeed, it is much more successful than privately owned manufacturing industry. Is it not the case that the success could not have been achieved without essential investment funded by the public purse and without debts being written off at the public expense? Is this to be yet another example of the taxpayer making the investment, but being denied the return; another case of the taxpayer picking up the bill but the City picking up the profit?

Does not this statement come at exactly the wrong moment—at a time when the EEC context in which the industry operates is in a state of maximum confusion? What will the Government say in the prospectus about quotas? What responsibility will the Government undertake to prospective buyers on that issue? Will not that uncertainty jeopardise the share issue altogether? Is not this another case of a privatisation which is dogma-driven and is to be carried through without regard to market conditions and the needs of the industry?

Does not the Minister's statement add to that uncertainty, particularly in regard to Ravenscraig? Is not the apparent guarantee of a seven-year future for Ravenscraig a hollow promise, depending as it does largely on so-called commercial considerations for which the Government will no doubt disclaim any responsibility, and depending also largely on the continuation of the hot strip mill, which, let it be noted, is given a guarantee for only the next 13 months? Can he not offer a better guarantee to Ravenscraig and its 3,000 workers than the weasel words contained in his statement?

Is it the Minister's intention to privatise British Steel as one entity, or is some other implication to be drawn from his statement? How is the privatisation to be organised? Is it to be by flotation or by merger, and if by merger, with whom? Finally, has the Minister taken the precaution of consulting the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) on this important issue?

Mr. Clarke: It is obviously true that British Steel has gone through a difficult time under public ownership. In the bad old days, when British Steel was not doing very well, public ownership cost the British taxpayer billions of pounds as the corporation struggled to come to terms with the difficulties in the steel market. It is not as a result of public ownership that it has improved; it is as a result of the considerable efforts of the management and work force as they have adjusted to sometimes painful changes and have brought the corporation to its present level of performance.

Now that the corporation has reached that position we are offering the flexibility and the opportunities that privatisation will give. It will be free of the restraints of Whitehall and the controls on its expenditure that public

ownership brings. It can now go to flotation and operate competitively and flexibly in the market place because it is a strong and efficient producer with a good future.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) asked about quotas. I shall be attending the European Steel Council next Tuesday which will be continuing discussions about what follows the present quota regime, which is due to come to an end on 31 December this year. At this moment, I have no idea what agreement will be arrived at, but we shall be pressing for an early return to free-market conditions and an end to quotas, which is the agreed objective of every other European Government.

British Steel is now in such a strong position vis-a-vis its European competitors that it is excellently placed to take advantage of that steady return to free-market conditions. That is another reason for privatising as soon as possible. In the state in which we shall be returning it to the market it will be a dangerous and powerful competitor to the other Europeans.

The hon. Gentleman describes what I have said about Ravenscraig as unsatisfactory, an inadequate assurance, and all the rest of it. I suspect that, politically, the hon. Gentleman is somewhat disappointed that the news about Ravenscraig is so good. When the Government have had to undertake the obligation, we have twice given three-year commitments, and the Opposition made the same remarks about weasel words on both occasions. That obligation has now passed to this profitable corporation and it can say that in its commercial judgment, and subject to the market, there will be steel making at Ravenscraig for at least the next seven years.

"Subject to the market" are not weasel words. As we have discovered over the past few years, in this business and every other, nationalised industries operate in the market. Private industries operate in the market. The world makes its living in the market place. This privatised corporation will make its living in the market place. But it is now so well placed that it can give that assurance, which should come as a considerable reassurance to all those who work in Ravenscraig.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about the form of flotation. We intend to float BSC as a single entity. We have taken careful advice, and that is obviously in the interests of the corporation and its owners, the taxpayers. We intend to proceed with that as soon as possible.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement. However, is it not a remarkable feat that, over the past several years, when the taxpayer's money has been put into Port Talbot, Llanwern and Ravenscraig, the workers there have responded heroically and are now turning out steel of a quality and at prices that are the best in the world? Is it not sad that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) does not know that, and has not talked to the workers there?

Finally, will my right hon. Friend be aggressive in his approach to Europe, and try to roll back the quotas so that British Steel can take advantage of its success?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's opening remarks. I believe that the work force at Llanwern, Port Talbot, Ravenscraig and Cleveland all realise that the changes of the past few years were necessary—necessary for their future, for the health of British Steel and for British industry as a whole, because it uses steel. That should be acknowledged, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has acknowledged it.

We intend to take a strong stance in the negotiations with Europe. The present quota systems are now inhibiting British Steel's ability to take advantage of its new competitive position. That cannot continue, and for that reason we are pressing for an early end to quotas. We seem to have substantial support from the other European countries.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster accept that we are, of course, pleased with the success of British Steel, and the achievements made so far? In the light of today's statement, however, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that, in regard to the private sector, which is extremely competitive internationally, we must have certain assurances? We must be assured that the strategic role of steel in the British economy will be secured; that there will be safeguards relating to the percentage of foreign ownership; that the assets will be privatised at a fair and reasonable value, and will not be vulnerable to potential asset strippers; that the work force will have an opportunity both to be consulted about the proposals, and to acquire a stake in the company; and that our relationship with the EEC will acknowledge that we in this country have taken more than our fair share of capacity reductions?

On the particular issue of Ravenscraig, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledge that, while the assurances, such as they are, are welcome, they are definitely qualified? Does he accept that the commitment of British Steel and the Government to ensure that the mill continues for that seven-year period is dependent on its receiving investment that it has so far been denied? Will he give us an assurance that the mill will receive that investment, and that its seven-year future will be assured.

Mr. Clarke: If by his question about "the strategic role of British Steel" the hon. Gentleman means, "Can we be assured that British Steel will play a vital role in 'UK Limited', and in strengthening the British economy?," I can reassure him. We can be confident of that, because of the results that we are achieving and the likelihood of their being sustained. Making British Steel competitive and returning it to the market place is the best guarantee of the long-term future and success of the corporation.

Of course, we shall be aiming at flotation to receive a fair and reasonable value. We must maximise the return to the taxpayer by returning the corporation to the market in the right way, and we believe that floating it as a single entity is the best way to achieve that. As I have announced today, we are putting in hand the preparations——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister is driving Ted to sleep.

Mr. Clarke: This is not a contentious statement.

I have announced today that we are putting in hand the preparations for privatisation, but the details must be steadily evolved while we take the legislation through the House, and then take the corporation to the market. We shall consider whether there is a case for restricting foreign ownership, but it does not instantly appeal to me. However, I am attracted by the idea of workers being given the opportunity of shareholdings, and we shall consider that carefully. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is also attracted by that idea. Even the hon. Member for Dagenham has been

[Mr. Clarke]

known to make approving noises about worker shares in the past. Perhaps the Opposition Front Bench is pressing me in the same direction.

As for Ravenscraig, the hon. Gentleman referred to things being welcome but qualified, which makes it sound as though he has been taking part in too many delicate negotiations about mergers and is losing his assertive edge. They are undoubtedly welcome. It is reassuring that the corporation, which is to be a private company, sees the need for steel making over seven years. There are many other factories about which that could not be said by the owners. The qualifications are commonsense qualifications that every private company, owning any factory anywhere, would make if one asked it about its plant. It would say that it must be subject to market conditions and to commercial considerations, because it is the wise commercial judgment of a company's management that guarantees the future of the company. Investment will be a matter for the private sector company. It will have to decide where to make that investment.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members for brief questions? There is to be a business statement, during which many of these questions may be relevant.

Sir John Stradling Thomas (Monmouth): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, which provides hope particularly for the future of both Llanwern and Port Talbot, which are so vital to the Welsh economy. Does my right hon. and learned Friend not agree that to give them the opportunity that they are ready to grasp he must pursue what he has suggested is his approach to the negotiations with the Common Market regarding the bedevilled quota system? Given the opportunity, Llanwern and Port Talbot can take on the world.

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's remarks, and I shall bear them in mind next Tuesday when I am in Europe. The quota system was one of those temporary and unpleasant necessities that we should now move to end. When we return to a free market, I am sure that both Port Talbot and Llanwern will be particularly well placed to take advantage of improved market opportunities.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): What is the total amount of taxpayers' money that has been invested since this Government came to office in 1979?

Mr. Clarke: We are trying to work out what the total bill has been for past losses and many other kinds of financial cover for BSC. It is a cost that has been largely incurred as a result of foolish decisions taken by past Labour Governments. If the right hon. Gentleman were to table a question, I should try to give him detailed guidance. It is difficult to reach the total, but I can assure him that several billion pounds have been invested in BSC during the last few years. That merely underlines what an achievement it is to be able to come to the House and say that BSC has made a profit of £190 million in half a year and that it can return to the market place.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the seven-year guarantee for Ravenscraig, the two-year guarantee for the hot strip mill and the Scottish long-term option for a purchase in that country is wonderful news for Scotland, and that it is far better than the Opposition could ever have expected? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that British Steel and the Government deserve many congratulations for turning round an industry that was devastated by the last Labour Government?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The Opposition were sitting there waiting for bad news about Ravenscraig, but what they have is good news for Ravenscraig. It is good news because of the corporation's own achievements and the present strength of BSC.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Is the Minister aware that Ravenscraig and the other works in my constituency have performed at least as well as any works within the British Steel Corporation? Is he aware that privatisation will plunge the steel industry back into all the uncertainties and inefficiencies of the past, which will have a devastating effect on the steel communities? Is the Minister also aware that it will be grossly inefficient and extremely damaging to Scotland if the Government sell off the British Steel Corporation in such a way that the hot strip mill can be closed in 1989, with a rundown rump of steelmaking being offered for sale at the end of seven years?

If the Government insist on pushing through privatisation, will they allow full facilities for a private bid to be prepared for Ravenscraig, plus sufficient finishing mills and other plant to make it a viable unit that can compete with the rest of the steel industry?

Mr. Clarke: There are always uncertainties in the market place for any product, but it is possible to embark upon those uncertainties with more confidence if there is a profitable and competitive business—as British Steel is. I do not believe that the immediate prospects are as the hon. Gentleman describes them. The outlook for Ravenscraig is more cheerful now than it has been for a long time. Previously, Ravenscraig had to rely on political three-year guarantees. They will no longer be necessary.

There is a problem with hot strip mills, as I frankly disclosed in my statement. There is surplus capacity in the United Kingdom. However, the commercial judgment of the corporation is that it can continue to operate all four strip mills, at least until 1989. Then the private company will have to decide whether to continue with all four. That is what happens in every other industry, and it will inevitably happen in this one.

The question of separate bids does not arise. We have taken clear advice on a variety of options and it is in the best interests of British Steel and the taxpayer that there should be flotation as a single entity. That is by far the most sensible course.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be great satisfaction about this announcement in Wales, where everybody, except the professional moaners, are aware of the immense opportunities that it will open up for the Welsh steel industry?

Mr. Clarke: I quite agree with my hon. Friend. There will also be rejoicing in Wales that the Government have decided not to intervene, on political grounds, as to where there should be investment and where there should be changes. This should be a commercial judgment by BSC, in the best interests of BSC as a whole in England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that during the steel strike his right hon. Friend Sir Keith Joseph, the then Member for Leeds, North-East, defended his refusal to intervene in the affairs of the British Steel Corporation because there was a taxpayers' stake in it? Where does the right hon. and learned Gentleman get his mandate from today to prevent that taxpayers' stake from becoming profitable for the nation? Furthermore, if the chairman of the British Steel Corporation had had his way in earlier days, Port Talbot and Llanwern would have been destroyed and would have been unable to make a contribution to the steel industry today.

Mr. Clarke: As for our mandate, we seemed to do reasonably well in the last general election, when the Government's policy was to return successful public industries to private ownership. That is what we are proposing to do. As for the hon. Gentleman's last point, I do not believe that there has ever been a serious risk to Port Talbot. Port Talbot is one of the flagship plants of the British Steel Corporation. A great deal of investment has been put into it, and in my opinion it has a secure future. I am also quite sure that in the opinion of the chairman of the British Steel Corporation it has an extremely secure future.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. and learned Friend, in a moment of humility, commiserate with the Opposition over the fact that they have not been given the opportunity to pretend that they are sorry because something has been lost instead of rejoicing in the fact that something is profitable? Will he remind them, please, that Ravenscraig is profitable because the work force has made it profitable—that it is not some sort of mascot Socialist toy that has to be kept because it is Scottish, that it is being kept because it is good and successful?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that the work force at Ravenscraig has made its contribution to the success of BSC. I am sure that the work force at Ravenscraig will be disappointed that the Opposition would prefer bad news about the future of that particular plant, for their political purposes, to the good news that they have just heard.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, may I make it clear to the House that we shall be opposing the privatisation of the steel industry, thereby accurately reflecting the decisions that were taken politically in Scotland and Wales at the last general election. As for Ravenscraig, may I ask for an assurance beyond 1989 for the hot strip mill, since 40 per cent. of the work force at Ravenscraig depends on the hot strip mill? If the Government are genuinely concerned about the future of Ravenscraig, may I ask them to return to the British Steel Corporation and say that the coke ovens at Ravenscraig are in great need of investment, as that would guarantee the continuation of the steel plant?

Mr. Clarke: First, I should tell the hon. Lady that 400 people work at Ravenscraig on the strip mill, although about 200 or 300 other jobs associated with the mill are dependent on it. Over 2,000 other people work in the rest of the plant, so the hon. Lady's figure of 40 per cent. is inflated.

As to the future of the strip mill, it is not possible to look beyond 1989 at the moment. Nobody is saying that it will close; we are saying that at the moment British Steel faces a serious problem with excess capacity. As a result, it is under-utilising all its strip mills, which is damaging efficiency and cannot go on indefinitely unless the market improves. Against that background, it is good news that the corporation has decided that the right commercial course is to keep them all going until at least 1989. It will then have to decide whether the position has improved and what it intends to do.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to reflect that not many years ago the steel industry was costing British taxpayers £4 million a day? That money has today been spent on the National Health Service, and is probably much better spent on it than it was on British Steel's works. Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the steel workers who live and work in my constituency elected me on a privatisation programme? I look forward to that programme happening, as they do, particularly if they are given a proper share in the stock option later this year.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In 1979-80—its peak year of losses—BSC lost £1·75 billion. My mathematics is inferior to my hon. Friend's, but I calculate that it was costing about £5 million a day in 1979-80, which was part of the great public sector investment that Labour Members say we should be recouping. That money is no longer going from the taxpayer to a loss-making industry, and we are looking forward to privatising a successful industry. BSC is successful in the north-east, which is an area with many problems. The Cleveland plant is a successful and modern one, and its future is enhanced by what it has to offer. I hear what my hon. Friend says about workers being allowed to participate in the flotation and take an ownership stake in the company that they are serving so well.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Minister will know that Shotton steelworks in my constituency lost 8,000 jobs in 1980, which was the largest recorded redundancy in western Europe. Does he recollect that last month his ministerial colleague told me that as recently as last year Britain imported £1 billion-worth of hot rolled steel? Some 22 million tons of it have been imported since 1980, at a cost of about £5 billion. Why have we had so many redundancies in the 1980s and such a high level of imports? Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot believe that privatisation will assist Britain's problem with heavy imports? He should know that my constituents will not back his proposals.

Mr. Clarke: I have every sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. I could not help reflecting, when I listened to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) worrying about the uncertainty of the position of 700 people beyond 1989, that in Shotton 8,000 jobs were lost in one set of redundancies at the depths of BSC's problems. As those times are behind us, the present employees of British Steel have a much more secure future to look forward to because of its success.

The hon. Gentleman asked about imports; we also export substantial amounts of steel. There is a competitive market in Europe that we wish to return to. There will be

[Mr. Clarke]

some imports into Britain to give our users choice, but there will also be exports into western Europe. One of the principal reasons for getting rid of quotas, as my hon. Friends have been urging, is that at the moment they are holding us back from penetrating German, French and other markets. We intend to try to get rid of them.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On behalf of many people on Teesside, particularly those in my constituency, I welcome today's announcement that British Steel is to be privatised. When my right hon. and learned Friend visited Teesside during the summer, did he notice the energetic and competitive spirit that is permeating the work force? Did he not see that not only have we a successful plant on Teesside, which is the largest blast furnace in Europe, but that many of my constituents are eager to compete with international producers, and are sending steel as far as San Francisco and Hong Kong? They look forward to doing that in the private market in the future.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. I was impressed when I went to Cleveland and saw the fantastically modern facilities and the spectacular giant blast furnace at Redcar. When talking to the work force one felt that they realised they were in a competitive business, and they were eager to compete. One wondered at the transformation that had been wrought in a nationalised industry of this kind. That feeling leads one to consider that the natural conclusion is to make it a private sector company, and I am sure that the people of Cleveland will make a great success of it.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): May I help the Minister and the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) with their mathematics? We have lost 45,000 jobs on Teesside since the Government came to office. That figure does not relate only to the steelworks but to the chemical plants and docks. We know what bad news is about, but Labour Members do not celebrate it — we have experienced it. The hon. Members for Stockton South, (Mr. Devlin) and for Langbaurgh said that the right hon. and learned Gentleman came to the steelworks, which he did, and I am sure that he talked to the work force. However, I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman listened to the work force, because with regard to the plans that the Government are proposing it is worried about what will happen with pensions. I should like to know what guarantees the right hon. and learned Gentleman will offer.

Mr. Clarke: The aspect of pensions will be addressed in the legislation, which will be introduced after Christmas in the current Session of Parliament. The matter of pensions has been raised in every piece of privatisation legislation that has gone through the House. We have enough privatisations behind us to know that the problem of pensions can be satisfactorily addressed. People can be reassured that they will not lose their pension rights as a result of the changes.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members representing steel constituencies have experienced bad news in the past decade? However, we have also had plenty of good news. This will be treated as good news by my constituents who work in the steel industry. Is this not an outstanding example of how, when the work force and management in a nationalised industry are determined to adjust to the realities of the market place, real results can be achieved? Will my right hon. and learned Friend do all that he can to ensure that the work force is rewarded by having preferential treatment in share applications?

Mr. Clarke: Corby has experienced great job losses in the steel industry, but it has achieved amazing success in attracting alternative employment and getting new development going. As a town, Corby is definitely on the up. The remaining employees of British Steel in Corby will, as my hon. Friend does, take reassurance from today's news. I hope to be able to meet my hon. Friend's request for them to be given an opportunity to participate in the eventual flotation.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the Minister explain why, during the election campaign, Ministers came to my constituency and told people that it would be many years before the steelworks was privatised? Does this mean that they were deliberately misleading my constituents, or, more to the point, that, with the failure of the BP flotation, BSC is to be sacrificed to regain some of the Government's lost credibility? What guarantees will the Minister give that the people who work in the industry — whose productivity and sacrifices in jobs and conditions have turned it around—will, at the very last, not be worse off as a result of privatisation?

Mr. Clarke: On several occasions, the previous team of Ministers made it clear that it was the aim of the Government to return British Steel to the private sector as soon as practicable. I do not know whether one of my colleagues expressed pessimism during a visit to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but perhaps he did not anticipate the remarkable recovery that British Steel has made so quickly. Today's results are a staggering achievement, and it is obvious they are likely to be sustained.

The terms and conditions of the work force will mainly depend on the success of the business. For as long as British Steel continues to go from strength to strength, the work force can look forward to sharing in that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this is very good news for the Welsh economy? It means that, because the Government grasped the nettle and ensured that we had large improvements in productivity at Llanwern and Port Talbot, those plants can look forward to a successful future under private ownership?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The two plants are extremely strong and successful and are likely to attract future investment. They have everything to hope for from the privatisation that we have announced.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): When Sir Robert Scholey announced that he wanted to aim for profits of £300 million-plus per year before the industry was set on the road to privatisation, he gave as the main reason for wishing to make such a profit that that is what is required to invest for the future. As a result of the higher levels of profits that are now being achieved, will the Minister tell the House what proposals there are for fixed capital

improvements in the industry, or will the higher profits be put in the reserves ready for privatisation and not invested?

Mr. Clarke: Sir Robert probably did set a figure of £300 million a year as the threshold for privatisation. Today's results of £190 million for a half-year and with the second half-year looking as good as the first show that we are well above that threshold. That is why today's announcement was made. With regard to investments, I am sure that Sir Robert shares the opinion of us all that it is essential that investment is maintained in the steel industry because the markets remain competitive and the quality demanded by customers is ever higher. Until the industry is privatised, investment proposals will have to come to me for approval. There are no formal proposals at the moment, but it is likely that some will be made. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, unless there is some compelling financial or commercial reason against the proposals, worthwhile investment proposals will receive our approval and will not be delayed by the Government. After privatisation, investment decisions will be entirely a matter for the new privatised company.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many British consumers of steel will welcome his announcement today? Is he aware of the contrast between the losses of £35 million a week under the Labour Government and the £7 million a week profit under a Conservative Government? Perhaps that shows the different approach to enterprise which has resulted in my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement today.

Mr. Clarke: The contrast is symbolic of a great deal that has happened in the British economy over the past eight or nine years. From being one of the disaster areas of the British economy seven or eight years ago, British Steel is now one of our great successes. It is one of the most powerful competitors in steel in western Europe.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the Minister accept that, if the ending of steel quotas to which he has referred happened today, under too current circumstances that would benefit BSC enormously with regard to steel making, as BSC would make a massive profit? Is not today's statement more likely to enhance private cartels than competition?

Mr. Clarke: No, I do not think that the statement today has anything to do with private cartels, because the private company will be subject to the same rules on monopolies and trade as any other private company. Only time will tell whether the European steel producers will try to arrange cartels. The present European cartel with the quota system is now operating in a way that inhibits British Steel's growth. I am glad to say that not only I, but all other European Council Ministers agree that we must move within a reasonable time to remove the quotas.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does the Chancellor recall the pledge given in this House on behalf of the Conservative party during proceedings on the Steel Bill in 1966, when we undertook to return the industry to private ownership? Despite the failure during the premiership of the Chancellor's right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to redeem that pledge, does my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor share my satisfaction that it has fallen to our right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) to redeem the honour of the Conservative party?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that it has taken a long time, and rather longer than most of us would have wished, to get British Steel back to where it ought to be. I share my hon. Friend's pride in the fact that we have been able to do that because of the achievements in British Steel and because of the changes made in the British economic climate over the past few years.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for very brief questions. I should like to try to call hon. Members who have been rising, but it would be helpful if they did not repeat what has been said before and particularly only if they have interests in these matters.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Does the Minister really expect the public to believe that this privatisation is anything other than an example of a Government of political spivs selling off the last items of the family silver? What comfort can my constituents who work at and depend on Ravenscraig get from paper assurances by a Government who are just about to dump the whole of this vital and strategic industry into the hands of the private sector which has so dramatically failed the industry in the past?

Mr. Clarke: I thought that the Opposition were having a re-think about nationalisation and renationalisation. When the two years are up, I will be interested to see whether there is a commitment to renationalise this or any other industry because the legislation will have been passed and privatisation completed by then. The assurances that I have given are assurances from the British Steel Corporation, the assurances of the new company. According to its commercial judgment, it expects steel making to continue at Ravenscraig for seven years as long as the market demand is sustained as it is at the moment.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): In view of my right hon. and learned Friend's statement that both hot strip mills are being under-utilised, would not British Steel's correct commercial decision — not its political decision—be to concentrate in one plant, not two? That plant should clearly be in south Wales. Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his statement today represents yet another example of Welsh and English workers subsidising those in Scotland?

Mr. Clarke: There are four hot strip mills, at Port Talbot, Llanwern, Lackenby in the north-east and Ravenscraig. Certainly at the moment they are all being run below capacity because of the very large surplus of capacity, which sooner or later will have to be addressed by the private sector company unless conditions improve.

I agree with my hon. Friend that if the Government in their wisdom were to take a political decision for some reason that one of those hot strip mills should be favoured at the expense of the others, we would wind up favouring the workers of one nationality against the workers of another. That would be grotesquely unfair. The right thing to do would be to leave it up to the corporation to make its own decision in the light of conditions in 1989.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Supposing they were to get an offer for Ravenscraig, Dalzell and associated works, what would be the Government's likely attitude?

Mr. Clarke: We looked at various options when we considered how to privatise, and we have taken financial advice on a range of options. Our judgment is that we must go for a flotation of the company as a single entity. The idea of any separate bid or flotation of the Scottish part of the company or any other part of the corporation is not practicable nor is it a desirable financial objective. That would be likely to damage the steel industry as a whole and greatly minimise the returns.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, if next week's negotiations hasten the abolition of quotas, British Steel will have every prospect of enabling Britain to become a net exporter of steel to the whole of Europe once again? Will that not be the crowning achievement of its recovery?

Mr. Clarke: That is right. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) who has Shotton in his constituency, understandably referred back a few years to traumatic events in his constituency and asked questions which implied that we are afraid of imports from stronger steel makers overseas. That is no longer the position. There are still imports, because users like different sources of supply. British Steel is increasingly an exporter, and the more it goes from strength to strength, the more likely it is to build up its exports. Quotas are now getting in the way.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Minister reflect on the question of capacity as distinct from market share? Will he reflect on the fact that we have lost more than 70,000 jobs in the steel industry? When he tries to reconcile the turnround of the steel industry, will he look at the other side of the balance sheet—at the social costs and the costs in payments of unemployment benefit to those thousands of people?

Can we advise the British Steel Corporation, instead of concentrating on capacity, to talk about a bigger market share? We have lost a massive market share in British Steel in the past eight years. What are we producing in this country today? We do not have the kind of industry that we had before. When we talk about market share, we should remove the cartel from Europe, as that will allow us to get back some of the orders that people have taken——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unfair for the hon. Gentleman to go on as long as this.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman talked about the market share. One gets into difficulties if one has the capacity to produce vastly more steel than one can sell. That is true of any product. British Steel faced that problem some years ago. The result was that the closure process began while the industry was nationalised—and it started under Labour. As I recall, it was under Labour that the steelworks at Bilston and Ebbw Vale went. That process was inevitable as long as the steel industry did not occupy a secure place in the market. There is still a great deal of excess capacity in western Europe. The figures vary, but the Commission and its experts say that, and there will undoubtedly be closures in other western European countries. We have got our steel corporation into a much better state than other European countries' industries and we can now look to the future optimistically, with the worst of the change behind us.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the Minister accept that it has taken eight years, about £6 billion of public money and the loss of 70,000 jobs for us to arrive at the present state of affairs? What sort of a policy is it that insists that, although the taxpayer has funded all those losses for eight years, the benefits must be reaped by the private sector, which has contributed very little during that period? Should not the taxpayer be rewarded for his investment?

Mr. Clarke: In the first place, the taxpayer will get the returns on the flotation, which will be some recompense for the considerable losses and costs incurred while the British Steel Corporation was being nursed back to health. Our main consideration has to be the future of British steel—the health of the industry and its ability to produce good quality, low cost steel for British steel users. That will be best achieved if the British Steel Corporation is a private sector company, subject to commercial disciplines in the market place.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Minister explain to Scottish Members and Scottish steel workers, why, in his announcement of his plans to privatise five integrated plants across the United Kingdom, he found it necessary to single out Ravenscraig as the one plant that is likely to have a limited future and the one plant that the Government would consider hiving off to a separate private sector buyer? Does he not realise that singling out Ravenscraig puts an enormous question mark over its long-term future?

Mr. Clarke: I have a lot of sympathy with that. Every time I go to Scotland, people will talk about nothing but Ravenscraig. They talk about it in terms that suggest that it is a commercial disaster and that it is kept going only by the Government's political guarantees. We have given political guarantees to keep Ravenscraig going. The fact is that the corporation—the owner—has said that in its commercial judgment steel making will be required at Ravenscraig, subject to market conditions, for the next seven years. Because Ravenscraig has always felt itself particularly protected by the Government's guarantees, I felt it necessary to go carefully on the hope that the proposals offer it for the future.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Given the Minister's optimism and the smugness of his Back Benchers, it is obvious to those of us who come from places such as Sheffield, and to all Opposition Members, that another great steel robbery is about to take place. The Minister will know that we have just lost 600 jobs at Stocksbridge Engineering Steels in my constituency. The phrase "subject to market conditions" will loom over the steel industry during this period. Furthermore, I gather that a great tranche of unemployment—about 22,000 job losses—is to come from the EEC. Will any of those job losses occur during the period of the takeover and the robbery? Are the Sheffield works—indeed, all the works in the constituencies of Opposition Members who have stayed to listen to the Minister's statement—to suffer some more?

Mr. Clarke: the business of being subject to the market place and the fact that some job losses still occur in private

steel engineering works and in parts of the steel industry is an inevitable consequence of economic life, whether a company is nationalised or privatised. If one does well in the market place, jobs are secure and additional jobs are created, but jobs are inevitably at risk if one does badly in the market place. I shall not restate that proposition again. Presumably, the hon. Gentleman's fear that the EEC is about to inflict another 22,000 job losses is related to the belief that is held by some that the European Community determines whether steelworks should be closed. That is most emphatically not the case. There is no question of the Commission or the Community next week determining the future of any British plant. While the industry is nationalised, that is entirely a matter for the British Government, but as there will be no change in configuration until the industry is privatised, such closures will be a matter for the private sector British company in the years beyond privatisation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Minister believe that the new privatised British Steel Corporation will be any more vigorous in its pursuit of economies and higher productivity than the nationalised industry? If so, does that not spell danger for plants on the periphery of the United Kingdom, such as those in Workington, which, although highly profitable, might not feature prominently in any configuration demanded by shareholders at an annual general meeting?

Mr. Clarke: The corporation has been pursuing higher productivity and greater efficiency for the past eight years with considerable success, so that the amount of liquid steel produced by the British Steel Corporation is not much less than it was in 1979 although the corporation has roughly one third of the work force that it had then.

That was an inevitable process if the industry was to survive in an ever more competitive market for ever more high quality steel. Success in achieving greater efficiency and the profitability of producers give the best assurance to all those who work for the British Steel Corporation. That process must be sustained. It cannot stop, whether the corporation is publicly or privately owned. The world gets ever more competitive, productivity levels increase everywhere and technology changes — technology has changed very rapidly in the steel industry—but if BSC does as well in the years ahead as it has in the past few years, everyone can feel much more confident about its future.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): A tribute has been paid to the great sacrifices made by the work force and the families of those in the steel-working communities. Will the Minister urge, as an act of natural justice, that before privatisation goes ahead, the profits to which the communities have contributed enormously will be used specifically to ensure that there is a continuous annealing plant at Llanwern and a second continuous casting plant at Port Talbot? Those are essential if the competitiveness of the industry and the security of British steelworkers' jobs are to be guaranteed for the future.

Mr. Clarke: First, I join in the hon. Gentleman's tribute. On investment at Port Talbot and Llanwern and more continuous casting in that part of the country, British Steel will have in the first place to put some formal proposals to me if it has such plans while it remains in public ownership. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall examine carefully any such proposals and that I realise that it would be quite wrong to delay good and justifiable investment proposals. Port Talbot and Llanwern are very good plants, but they need continuous investment if they are to sustain themselves in the future.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Why should those of us interested in Ravenscraig feel reassured when the guarantee for that plant is being downgraded to a qualified commercial requirement, and when even that is subject to market conditions? What are the Ravenscraig workers to make of a pledge from a Government who are determined to shed responsibility for the industry and who accept that the privatised steel corporation may sell off or close the plant at any time? Why should the workers trust the Minister when he will give no promises for the vital strip mill capacity beyond 1989?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement not a fraudulent front, given that the reality will be further uncertainty for Ravenscraig — a plant that deserves better and which is now to be left to the profit motive and the commercial judgment of business men, who, as the Minister has heavily underlined, are already under pressure to shed further capacity?

Mr. Clarke: I find the hon. Gentleman's reaction very difficult to understand. In talking about the future of any manufacturing business, he really cannot be so dismissive of market conditions and the commercial judgment of business men. I cannot believe that if, heaven help us, the hon. Gentleman was ever responsible for these matters, he would start giving assurances about a steel business that disregarded market conditions or guarantees that he would ignore commercial judgments. That would be an act of irresponsible folly. Facing up to market conditions and to the reality of commercial judgments, the corporation can give such an assurance for the next seven years. That is very good news indeed for Ravenscraig and I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman really expected any such assurance.

Business of the House

4.40 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Health and Medicines Bill. Motion on the British Film Fund Agency (Dissolution) Order.

At ten o'clock the House will be asked to agree the Civil and Defence Votes on Account and the Winter Supplementary Estimates.

TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER — Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER—Motion on the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1988-89 (HC No. 163)

Afterwards a debate on EC documents relating to fisheries arrangements for 1988. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER — Remaining stages of the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill.

Motions on the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) (No. 3) and (No. 4) Orders.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 14 DECEMBER—Until Seven o'clock, Private Members' motions, followed by progress on remaining stages of the Local Government Bill.

The House will wish to know that it is proposed that, subject to the progress of business, the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Friday 18 December, until Monday 11 January.

Debate on Wednesday 9 December:

Relevant European Community Documents:

(a) 6388/87	*Market in fishery products*
(b) 9585/87	*Fish guide prices*
(c) Unnumbered	*Fisheries: Total allowable catches and quotas 1988*
(d) Unnumbered	*Reciprocal fisheries agreement with Norway 1988*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 43-i (1987-88), para 5
(b) HC 43-vi (1987-88), para 2
(c) HC 43-viii (1987-88), para 5
(d) HC 43-viii (1987-88), para 6.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Arising from the statement on the British steel industry, the announcement of results was clearly a tribute to the efforts and sacrifices of workers and management, past and present, but the announcement of future privatisation was an insult to those people and the general public without whom we would not have a steel industry of any description in Britain. Before the legislation comes forward, will the Leader of the House ensure that we have a full debate on the strategy of the British steel industry, so that the House, the general public and steel communities can get a much clearer idea of what BSC and the Government propose for the industry in Scotland, Wales and England? It was not evident from the statement that we have just heard.

After the exchanges in the House last night on the future of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, I am sure that the Leader of the House will agree that it will be highly unsatisfactory if the issue is not debated on the Floor of the House before the House goes into recess for Christmas. Will he assure us that there will be such a debate?

Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early and comprehensive statement to the House on severe weather payments? There is a great need to take early action, for pensioners and others will be at risk as the weather gets much colder over the next six weeks or so.

A month ago, I pointed out to the Leader of the House that, through the operation of their mean and clumsy local government finance policies, the Government are trying to make a profit out of the aid provided to regions that have to meet the large and unavoidable costs that arose from the storm damage in October. The right hon. Gentleman will have now seen the letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment from the chief executive of the London borough of Barnet, which includes the Prime Minister's constituency. That letter shows that the Treasury has profited to the extent of £70,000 on every £100,000 that has been spent by the council on repairing storm damage and that ratepayers will have to find £170,000 for every £100,000 that is actually used for repairs. The chief executive said:

"It is quite wrong that the Treasury should profit from a public catastrophe."

Does the Leader of the House accept that principle? Will he now arrange for a debate to examine what must have been just about the most barefaced con trick in the lifetime of a Government who have made a speciality of sharp practice?

Will the Leader of the House confirm that, despite their stubborn and undemocratic refusal to provide proper time to debate the Education Reform Bill this week, the Government will change their ways and allow at least two full days for the Second Reading debate on the poll tax Bill?

Also on the poll tax Bill, when will the regulations setting out the income levels for the operation of any poll tax rebate be published? Clearly, it is essential — *[Interruption.]* Shut up! *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who is sitting below the Gangway, is one of the biggest ignoramuses in the House.

Mr. Marlow: Get on with it, red-headed windbag.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: He constantly disrupts the business of the House.

Mr. Marlow: Get on with the question, you twerp.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unseemly to shout from a sedentary position like that. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kinnock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the subject of the poll tax, can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House when we will have the regulations setting out the income levels for the operation of any rebate system that is to be operated under the poll tax Act? It is a matter of considerable importance. Clearly, rates and abatements will be of considerable importance to all hon. Members when they consider whether to support the Bill.

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House when the Welsh rate support grant will be announced to the House?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take points of order afterwards.

Mr. Wakeham: The Leader of the Opposition asked me six questions. I cannot promise him an additional debate on British Steel, but my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that legislation would be introduced after Christmas. I have no doubt that such matters will be debated considerably in the House in the months to come.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I am pleased that the majority of Select Committees were established at a late hour last night. The Committee of Selection hopes to reach a conclusion on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs at its meeting on Wednesday. When the Committee of Selection has reached a conclusion, I shall arrange for a debate to take place before Christmas, if that is the wish of the House.

With regard to severe weather payments, I cannot offer the right hon. Gentleman a debate or a statement. Of course, this Government established the first properly based scheme of cash help during exceptionally cold weather. In 1985-86 expenditure on heating additions alone was about £430 million, £140 million more in real terms than was spent in 1978-79.

With regard to storm damage, the right hon. Gentleman could not have read or heard what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said yesterday. He did not accept the allegations that were made by the gentleman to whom the right hon. Gentleman referred.

The Local Government Finance Bill will be published tomorrow. I shall certainly consider the right hon. Gentleman's request for a two-day Second Reading debate, and will arrange for that matter to be further discussed through the usual channels, I hope with a positive result.

I recognise the importance of rebates. I shall refer the matter to the Secretary of State to see whether the regulations can be published as soon as possible.

I shall arrange for the Welsh statement to be made next week.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): My right hon. Friend gave a fairly encouraging response to the request for a two-day debate on the Local Government Finance Bill. It is not only on the Opposition side but on the Government side of the House that there is a strong feeling that we need two days to debate such an important measure.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly accept my right hon. Friend's point.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): There is anxiety on this Bench that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs should be set up. We would welcome a debate on the matter before the House goes into recess for Christmas.

Surely the Leader of the House is aware of all hon. Members' concern about the developing tragedy in Ethiopia. When the crisis arose two years ago, Her Majesty's Government responded in terms of support from the Royal Air Force and by making intervention food available. Is it possible to have a statement next week on what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to relieve the crisis in Ethiopia?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the matter and the concern felt on both sides of the House. I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, and he will have to decide when it is appropriate to make any statement, if it should be helpful to do so.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the vast majority of hon. Members of all parties who wished to speak on the Education Reform Bill on Tuesday were disappointed? Will he give urgent consideration not only to giving an extra day for debates of that magnitude, but to having an early debate on giving the Chair the power to limit speeches to 10 minutes in such debates? That would give hon. Members of all parties an opportunity to participate.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the force of what my hon. Friend has said and we shall see what we can do about it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Andrew Faulds.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Undeserved, Sir.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the incompetence of British Telecom percolates into even these premises? Does he realise that we spent some millions of pounds on a new telephone system two or three years ago but that I am having frequent experience of malfunctioning—*[Laughter.]*—the telephone system is malfunctioning when I attempt to ring in to this building. The other day, having waited five minutes for a call into the building, I got a recorded message saying that nobody was available to answer it. Does he further understand that, when I raised this with the telephone supervisor, she claimed no knowledge of the existence of such a recording? I have written to the Serjeant at Arms to seek his advice on this matter but I think that the Leader of the House has some responsibility to inquire into why this extremely expensive, newly installed equipment is so extremely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly do my best to help the hon. Gentleman with the malfunctioning of the telephone system, but other things are beyond me. I shall have a word with the Serjeant at Arms about the reply that will go to the hon. Gentleman. If there is anything further that I can do, I shall assist him, because I recognise the inconvenience.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend think that there will be an opportunity to discuss British investment in Japan before we rise for Christmas? Does he accept that that is a timely question, given the welcome announcement earlier this week of the Japanese Government's agreement to accept Cable and Wireless's investment in an international telecommunications development as a result of representations made not only by Ministers but by many hon. Members of all parties?

Mr. Wakeham: I should have thought that that would be an excellent subject for the Christmas Adjournment debate or for the proceedings after the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill on Tuesday.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House reflect a little on his answer to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition about the setting-up of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? We accept in good faith his statement about a debate, but he is not unaware that there is no great veil of secrecy concerning the usual channels. If we accept the strictures made last night by the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, that the Government must have a majority on the Committee, that means that five Government Members must serve on it. We have already had statements from one who will not serve and another whose responsibility for serving will be undermined by the statement that he will destroy the Select Committee.

It is all very well for the Leader of the House to promise a debate on that, but what assurances will he give us that he will use his good offices through the Government Chief Whip to ensure that the Committee is set up, because its malfunction and non-existence is an affront to the people of Scotland who require the Select Committee to examine the functions of the Executive and Administration in Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: The usual channels are not unaware of the problems, and have sometimes, but not always, achieved solutions to them. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts that we shall do our best to find a solution. We can certainly have a debate on it, and the House must make the ultimate decision.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): In view of the anxieties about education, will my right hon. Friend arrange a one-hour debate, preferably in Opposition time, on the concept of brevity in the use of language, which would undoubtedly assist the Leader of the Opposition to assist the House?

Mr. Wakeham: If it would not inconvenience my hon. and learned Friend, the Christmas Adjournment or the proceedings after the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill might accommodate a speech from him on that point.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that I have heard reports that a settlement of the dispute about Opren, the drug that caused so much damage to so many people, is imminent? However, the settlement will be for only £2·75 million for 1,500 severely disabled people. If the settlement goes through, it will be scandalous, because on average the money received will be £2,000 for each person. Indeed, the whole sum is less than one person got in America and is less than the lawyers will receive for conducting the case. Could we please have a statement next week, and could the Minister for Health intervene to press the company to give a fair, just and proper settlement rather than this niggardly and despicable imposition on gravely disabled people?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's continuing concern about such matters. Obviously, I cannot say anything about that issue, but I shall ensure that the right hon. Gentleman's concern is conveyed to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider last week's call for a debate on the workings of the usual channels, following the seventh resignation of an Opposition Whip in six months? Will he recommend to his right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary either the secondment of a Government Whip to help sort out the Opposition office or the recruitment of a special adviser such as Lord Cairns?

Mr. Wakeham: That applies to hon. Members of all parties. I hope that we shall be able to continue the usual channels. I do not believe that it is best to deal with this in public.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May we have a statement next week about the composition of the Cabinet, in view of today's press reports that the Secretary of State for Scotland may be shifted to the job of Secretary of State for Social Services and that a member of the House of Lords may take over as governor-general of Scotland? Will the Leader of the House tell the Prime Minister that such an appointment from the other place would treat with absolute contempt the vast majority of people in Scotland who rejected the Government at the ballot box and who want a devolved Parliament instead of being ruled by the dispirited remnants of the Scottish Tory aristocracy?

Mr. Wakeham: Cutting out the flowery part of that question, I advise the hon. Gentleman that I shall not arrange a statement next week about the composition of the Cabinet. If any of the rumours that I have heard are in any way connected with the health of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, I can advise the House that he is considerably better. He is now at home, is making good progress and hopes to be back here soon.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, for some considerable time, many of us have received representations from companies and individuals in our constituencies who are frustrated by the postal service? Bearing in mind the present threatened dispute at Christmas, is it not time that we had a debate so that we can make it clear that we do not want just to suspend the monopoly of the Post Office, but to break it once and for all?

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I hope that your postman reads that.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises an important point, but at present I do not believe that a debate on that subject would be helpful. The two sides are still talking. We hope that good sense will prevail and that a sensible settlement is reached so that the threat of disruption to the Christmas mail is lifted.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 404 about the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh which I and 33 of my right hon. and hon. Friends have signed?

[That this House expresses extreme concern at the findings of the Medical Executive Committee of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, which illustrate the consequences of failing to provide sufficient funding of vital upgrading work at the hospital; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that Lothian Health Board is provided with the necessary funding to avoid the dire consequences of failing to take action on the projects detailed in the report.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman consider a new style of debate, in which I will readily concede that the health board has made available £400,000 of new money, provided that the Minister will admit that £7 million to £8 million is needed to make that world-famous teaching hospital fit for the 1980s, and provided that the Minister

will also accept that the crisis that is predicted in that hospital has been predicted not by politicians but by the medical staff who work there and know what is going on in the hospital?

Mr. Wakeham: I have seen the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. The Lothian health board is spending £18·5 million this financial year on the priorities that it has identified for improving or rebuilding its hospitals. That represents about 20 per cent. of the capital resources that are available to health boards in Scotland. The board is examining further new developments, including the replacement of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and is working closely with the medical executive committee and the local management to identify short to medium-term expenditure priorities at the Royal Infirmary.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Would my right hon. Friend find time for a debate to enable me to raise points coming to me from many constituents and, I know, to colleagues with constituents in a similar position on the subject of Labour councils which have contributed money from their pension funds to *News on Sunday* which has totally collapsed, with the consequent loss of their money? Since these Labour councils, certainly in the case of Ealing, were advised that it was illegal to make such payments —£250,000 in this case—ought not this matter to be debated by the House as a means of looking after those people, many of them very poor, whose money has been taken from them by this means?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important matter. I hope that my hon. Friend will find an opportunity to raise it in one of the debates on Tuesday, either on the Christmas Adjournment motion or in the proceedings after the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Leader of the House consult early-day motion 319?

[That a Select Committee of an agreed number of honourable Members be established to examine the current state of sport in Britain, the adequacy and deployment of its resources, its competitiveness at home and abroad, the facilities which it provides for both participants and spectators, its investment requirements, Government support, sponsorship, and promotion as well as any current or requested legislative change; and that the Committee be empowered to take evidence and report to the House from time to time.]

Will he consider the possibility of setting up a Select Committee on sport? In the meantime, would he make available an opportunity for a major debate on the state of British sport, including such topical matters as the increasing tendency towards sponsorship of sport by breweries? Would he agree that this is a matter of considerable public concern which extends beyond sport into wider aspects of society?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that sport is an important subject and that it is right from time to time to have debates on it in the House. As I have already indicated to one of my hon. Friends, I am looking for a time which might be available for such a debate.

As regards Select Committees, it is, of course, the Select Committee on the Environment that covers sport, in so far as it is one of the departmental Select Committees. It would be quite a major change, which the House would have to consider very carefully, if we were to change from the departmental Select Committees that were set up to cover all Departments and start increasing the number of specialist Select Committees, as the hon. Gentleman suggests. I would be interested in other views on that, but it would need a lot of consideration before we did it.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the increasing anger in parts of the country like my own, where parliamentary representation is, and has been for a considerable time, 100 per cent. Conservative, at the extraordinary antics of members of the Labour party who purport to believe that they have some kind of special mandate in Scotland, which not only allows them to take up a great deal of the time of the House in political posturing, but, if persisted in, will merely confirm the fact that the party of which they are such a vociferous part has no chance whatever of forming the Government of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Wakeham: The essentially bogus nature of the so-called Scottish mandate has been exposed many times in the House in recent weeks.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the Leader of the House find time before the recess to discuss the topic of British Coal housing? In Nottinghamshire, over 3,000 people are currently facing the privatisation of their homes. Contrary to what is being said in statements by British Coal, it is not always the case that the sitting tenant is allowed to buy in these circumstances. British Coal is currently refusing to accept an offer of over £7 million, put together by a consortium of housing associations. It is vital that this matter is discussed in an attempt to offer these people security in their old age, particularly before Christmas and before the cold winter sets in.

Mr. Wakeham: I have a feeling that the main responsibility for the matters with which the hon. Gentleman is concerned lies with British Coal, but if he were to seek to raise it on the Christmas Adjournment motion or in the proceedings after the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill I have no doubt that he would get an answer.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend look at early-day motion 331 in my name and that of hon. Members on all sides about the deplorable publication *Holocaust News?*

[That this House views with repugnance the publication, Holocaust News, the aim of which is to deny the events of the Holocaust as "lies, exaggeration and preposterous tales," which have been "perpetrated by Zionist-Jewry's stunning propaganda machine"; considers its nation-wide distribution to schools, local councils, private addresses, honourable Members and many others as a clear attempt to stir up racial hatred contrary to the Public Order Act 1986; and urgently calls upon the Government to take appropriate action.]

Will he accept from me that I have now sent to the Solicitor-General counsel's opinion which suggests that there is a very strong case for the prosecution of this document? Will he arrange for the Attorney-General to make a statement to the House next week?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government regard this type of publication, which attempts to distort history, as wholly repugnant. The decision on whether a prosecution could be brought under section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986 is one for the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Law

[Mr. Wakeham]

Officers, not the Government. I understand that the prosecuting authorities have considered this publication and have decided that there is no basis for prosecution under section 19. I will, however, refer my hon. Friend's comments to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Leader of the House remain in his place after business questions and listen to the debate on the Public Accounts Committee's reports and any recommendations arising therefrom which relate to keeping Government expenditure under scrutiny?

Will he also consider the Procedure Committee report relating to the dates of recesses and allow Members to know well in advance, particularly for the summer recess, when the House will rise and resume?

When will the right hon. Gentleman be able to set up the Select Committee on Procedure?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall listen to as much of the debate as I am able to, but I know that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will be here, and I shall have an opportunity of talking to him afterwards.

With regard to the Procedure Committee reports, I am at the moment considering those that arose in the last Parliament and I will report to the House as soon as I can.

As to the dates of recesses, that is one of the recommendations that we are considering.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. Friend will be aware that since 1975 there have been 11 Bills on the reform of the abortion law, all of which have had substantial support in the House but have been obstructed during their passage. As the Abortion Act 1976 had tacit Government support in its progress through the House, will my right hon. Friend seriously consider, if the Bill of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) receives its Second Reading on 22 January, whether the Government can give support to allowing the Bill to come to fruition, if that is the will of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I will continue to consider these things, but the policy of the Government has been to be rather generous in the amount of time that they allocate to private Members' Bills but not, in the interests of fairness to all sides of the House and all points of view, to give specific additional time. That is basically the policy that I think we should adopt in this case.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the light of early-day motions 238, 253, 272, 273 and 286, and in the light of the failure of the Prime Minister to make any attempt to answer uncomplicated questions from myself and, more important, from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) who is a QC, does the Leader of the House not think that the way out of this problem is to announce next week the setting up of a tribunal, as he is empowered to do under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921, to examine under oath Mr. T. P. Abraham, Sir Robert Armstrong, Miss Collette Bowe, Sir Brian Hayes, Mr. Richard Mottram, Mr. John Mogg, Mr. John Michel, Mr. Bernard Ingham, Mr. Charles Powell and Sir Clive Whitmore to clear up this issue?

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office—A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27 January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign. . . .' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shaky enough to doubt her future' though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning. It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3 January and 27 January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland Affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. We did and calls on the Leader of the House, the Right honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.]

[That this House notes that in his book Mrs. Thatcher's Revolution, published this week by Jonathan Cape and Co., Mr. Peter Jenkins writes, on page 200 'Brittan himself refused to enlighten the Select Committee on any point of substance. However, he is reputed to have told close friends subsequently that not only has she known perfectly well what had happened but that, on the day following the leak, had expressed her satisfaction to him at the way things had been handled. However, at that time, the downfall of Heseltine had not been achieved. . . . He (Mr. Brittan) might point the finger at her (Mrs. Thatcher). Potentially he now had the power to destroy her'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give the House a full account of her conversations with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, over the period from 3 January and 27 January 1986, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that in The Thatcher Years—A decade of Revolution in British Politics, published by BBC Books, Mr. John Cole, on page 170 considering the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland Affair, writes 'why did he (Sir Robert Armstrong) not give her a quick interim report when he discovered that the leak was an inside job, authorised by her office? Why did Leon Brittan not tell her? Or the private secretary concerned? Or his chief, who sits in the same room? Or her press secretary? And why did she never ask?'; and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House of the answers to these questions.]

[That this House notes that, in the book 'Not with Honour—The Inside Story of the Westland Scandal', on page 142, Magnus Linklater and David Leigh write that 'Instead, following Havers's complaint, she spoke privately to Brittan about the leak. Although this is something the Prime Minister has failed to disclose, to widespread disbelief, the evidence comes from an authoritative source who told us: "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She

was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions." One of Brittan's friends adds, "Nobody thought it was a problem. The complaints were out of the public domain and any inquiry was expected to be a formality. Leon wasn't worried at all about it."; and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account to the House of the meeting between herself and the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, referred to therein.]

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing further to say on this matter.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder if my right hon. Friend—and I am asking for a debate—can tell those who are supposed to be in authority over the Church but who, according to today's issue of Crockford's, have lost their authority in ecclesiastical and theological matters, that they will be constitutionally extremely ill advised to dabble in secular affairs to the extent of threatening the Government's democratic mandate in the other place.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point as he frequently does, but I do not think that I have anything to add that relates to the business for next week.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): May I draw the attention of the House to item No. 30 on the remaining Orders of the Day, standing in the name of the Government Chief Whip, which should have enabled the Scottish Grand Committee and the Labour majority on it to deal with the Government's plans to dismantle the education system in Scotland, without disturbing the slumbers of people like the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) who complained earlier about Scottish activities?

Is the Leader of the House aware that the leader of the Liberal party made it impossible for the Scottish Grand Committee to consider that important subject, apparently because Liberal Members think it more important to do their Christmas shopping next Monday than to deal with the subject of education in Scotland? Is it the intention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to hide behind the apron strings of the leader of the Liberal party, or will the Government take steps to ensure that the Scottish Grand Committee can consider important subjects of that kind?

Mr. Wakeham: I understood that the matter in dispute was where the Committee should meet, rather than the subject that was to be discussed. The Government have behaved in a perfectly proper and constitutional manner. An objection has been taken to the proposal, and that is perfectly understandable.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a growing despair among the assessors in Scotland who have the job of drafting the register for the so-called community charge or poll tax? There is a growing despair among the officials who will have to deal with the collection of the poll tax and a growing despair among the officials who will have to draft the plans for the rebate scheme. Is he aware that that despair stems from the fact that the orders that have given the officials the power to do any of the things I have mentioned have not come before this House, and that therefore those officials have no power to perform their tasks? Is the Leader of the House aware that many of the officials believe that the poll tax is at least six months behind schedule for implementation in Scotland and that, unless the orders are placed before the House within the next few weeks, implementation on 1 April 1989 is impossible?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is discharging all his obligations in an exemplary fashion. Of course I will draw to his attention the advice tendered to me by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton).——

Mr. Maxton: Not me, but by the officials.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. and learned Friend will consider what the hon. Member for Cathcart has said and place what due weight he should upon those remarks.

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill

5.11 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment that will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill on Tuesday, 8 December.

Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Monday next, 7 December. A list showing the subjects and the times will be published later that day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two topics to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose name are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will appear on the list. Some debates may not last the full time alloted to them and it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Postal Services

5.12 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The danger to postal services over Christmas arising from the Government's intervention in the dispute over working hours in the Post Office where talks have failed, and the fact that yesterday the Government announced their intention to suspend the Postmaster-General's or the Government's monopoly."

Yesterday, you rebuked me, Mr. Speaker, for seeking to challenge your ruling by making points relating to the role of Parliament in this dispute. You said, Mr. Speaker —it is not an uncommon argument to come from the Chair—that there were other opportunities when these matters could be raised.

But the impact of a postal strike upon the whole community—upon individuals relying on the Christmas post, upon the business community and others—will be enormous. To put a question to the Prime Minister, to put a question on the business statement, to seek half an hour on the Consolidated Fund at midnight or a word on the Christmas Adjournment does not meet up, in my submission, to the enormity of what might happen as a direct result of the Government's intervention.

Normally, under Standing Order No. 20, Members rise and make a general argument. However, in this instance, I address my arguments specifically and exclusively to you, Sir. Standing Order No. 20 was designed to allow the House of Commons to turn its mind urgently to matters that affect the whole community, but for which there was no provision in the timetable of the House. During my 37 years in this House—and tomorrow is the anniversary of the day when I entered the House—I have drawn attention to the fact that the House must be able to discuss matters of urgency of this nature.

Mr. Speaker: One minute more.

Mr. Benn: Often, if a matter is raised before it happens the ruling is that it is hypothetical; if a matter is raised when it happens the ruling is that it is too delicate to debate. After an event has occurred often the ruling is that it is too late to debate it.

Postal workers work 48 hours a week. The Government have threatened to lift their monopoly and they want to privatise services. The Secretary of State responsible for those matters does not even sit in this House. The people whom we represent depend on the postal services, appreciate the work of those who deliver the post and will not understand, and neither will the public, if this House cannot find time to discuss this matter.

The reputation of Parliament depends on being able to discuss urgent matters. When people talk about disorder in the House or disrespect for Parliament I submit that such problems arise partly because the rules of the House are very often interpreted in such a way as to prevent urgent matters from coming to the attention of Parliament and the public.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the

House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the current situation in the Post Office dispute".

I have listened with care to what the right hon. Gentleman has said today, as I listened with care to his hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) yesterday. The right hon. Gentleman well knows that my sole duty when considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or Monday. I regret that the matter he has raised does not meet the criteria laid down in that Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House. However, as the right hon. Gentleman has raised the matter of my refusal to hear him yesterday, may I say that there are other opportunities whereby he may be able to discuss this extremely important matter. Perhaps I might suggest that the Consolidated Fund is one such opportunity.

Parliamentary Questions

5.15 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today, 122 questions were put down for the Prime Minister and there were two specific questions requiring specific answers that were not general or constituency questions. Those questions appeared in the top four of the ballot. Statistically, that sort of thing is likely to happen once every 20 years. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether there is any bias in the ballot in favour of specific questions or, if not, whether you yourself think that there should be some bias.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) knows that it is a ballot. I would welcome his attendance at the shuffle that takes place at five minutes past four every day. Many hon. Members have been to witness this phenomenon and I suggest that he does exactly the same. He will then see how fair it is.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is true that two specific questions came out of the list today. However, the significant thing is that those questions are put down a fortnight in advance. I make no point about the ballot; I assume that it is straight and above board.

The second specific question had been down for a fortnight and therefore the Prime Minister had a fortnight in which to consider what her answer would be. The key thing was that, after that fortnight's deliberation, she refused to answer. What is the point of putting down such detailed questions to the Prime Minister—previously she bragged about being able to answer any questions that were thrown at her, unlike previous Prime Ministers—when, after a fortnight's deliberation, she cannot come up with a decent answer? She is frightened of giving one.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows that that is not a question of order in the House. Every right hon. and hon. Member must take responsibility for what he or she says provided that it is in order.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order about the conduct of hon. Members in the House and about which there has been some concern. May I apologise straightaway for raising this matter in the absence of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), but if hon. Members ask a question during a statement I assume that they do what I do and sit in the Chamber for the remainder of the proceedings on that statement.

It was noticeable today that the hon. Member for Eastbourne launched a fairly scathing, personal attack on the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Is not the procedure and custom of the House that, if an hon. Member intends to refer in such terms to another right hon. or hon. Member, it is good manners and customary to give that person notice? I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, will remind hon. Members of that practice?

It was noticeable that the Prime Minister sat right through the private notice question and right through the statement on the steel industry until the attack was made. As soon as it had been made and dealt with, she immediately left. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is an obligation on you to stop this House being used as

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

some sort of backyard in which the Prime Minister, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and other Conservative Members can hang out the Tory party's dirty washing.

Mr. Speaker: I shall certainly reiterate what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is a convention in the House that we do not refer to each other in terms of an attack without giving due notice. I hope that hon. Members would never attack other hon. Members anyway, without good reason for doing so—and certainly not in order to make cheap points.

BILLS PRESENTED

Housing (Scotland)

Mr. Secretary Rifkind, supported by Mr. Ian Lang, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Mr. Secretary Ridley and Mr. John Major, presented a Bill to establish a body having functions relating to housing; and, as respects Scotland, to make further provision with respect to houses let on tenancies; to confer on that body and on persons approved for the purpose the right to acquire from public sector landlords certain houses occupied by secure tenants; to make further provision about rent officers and the administration of housing benefit and rent allowance subsidy; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

Local Government Finance

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Channon, Mr. John Major, Mr. Michael Howard and Mr. Christopher Chope, presented a Bill to create community charges in favour of certain authorities, to create new rating systems, to provide for precepting by certain authorities, and levying by certain bodies, to make provision about the payment of grants to certain authorities, to require certain authorities to maintain certain funds, to make provision about the administration of the financial affairs of certain authorities, to abolish existing rates, precepts and similar rights, to abolish rate support grants and supplementary grants for transport purposes, to make amendments as to certain grants, to make certain amendments to the law of Scotland as regards community charges, rating and valuation, to provide for the establishment of valuation and community charge tribunals, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 66.]

Public Accounts

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have not been able to select the amendment on the Order Paper in the names of the hon. Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett); but the substance of the amendment may be canvassed during the course of a speech if an hon. Member is successful in catching the eye of the Chair.

5.22 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

> That this House takes note of the 15th and 19th to 52nd Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1985-86, of the 1st to 19th Reports of Session 1986-87 and of the Treasury Minutes on those Reports (Cmnd. 9846, 9859, 9917 and 9924, and Cm. 138, 177, 224 and 236), with particular reference to the following Reports of Session 1985-86—
>
> Nineteenth, Expenditure on motorways and trunk roads;
> Twenty-fifth, Prison building programmes;
> Forty-fourth, Preventive medicine;
> Forty-fifth, Financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan Police;
> Fiftieth, Vehicle Excise Duty evasion and enforcement.

This is an annual debate; the last one was held on 3 July last year, when we had 30 reports to consider. Before that, on 24 October 1985, we had 51 reports; and on 20 March 1984, 46. This time, over a slightly longer period, we have a record 54 reports and eight Government replies. As on the past two occasions, we have chosen to highlight five reports, although many others may be mentioned in the course of the debate.

My first pleasant duty is to thank the Members of the Committee. They do dedicated work. There is a terrific amount of reading to be done, and I am delighted that the Committee regards its work with enthusiasm and that it is dedicated to the large amount of reading that is involved. Four of the members of the Committee retired or were defeated at the last general election and we have given our thanks to them. We also had on the Committee for part of the time covered by the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who was recently appointed Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission; and we welcomed new Members—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam), the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and, for a short stay, my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who was appointed in July but discharged last Friday because of his new post on the Opposition Front Bench. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South was instrumental in bringing about so many of these changes, as it was he who did the research into the last century and discovered that the Comptroller and Auditor General had been a proper Officer of the House, responsible only to this House. That was what prompted the Norman St. John-Stevas Bill—the National Audit Act 1983—which reinstated the position as of before. As I said, my hon. Friend has been appointed to an Opposition Front Bench post, and, for the same reason,

we are losing my hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

The great thing about the Committee's work is that its reports are unanimous. That is not to say that we have been emasculated in a party political sense. We remain politicians, deeply conscious of our allegiance to our parties and of the need and importance of party politics. However, we also recognise that we cannot allow the taxpayer to get anything less than full value for the money that is spent on his behalf. Our very unanimity transcends problems of party allegiance, and they do not appear in the work of the Committee. So, whenever our reports are discussed and our recommendations are noted, we always say that the most important thing is value for money, and that always remains our objective.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury is a member of the Committee and is always welcome to attend. Traditionally, however, he comes only at the beginning of the Session, and rarely thereafter.

The National Audit Office and the Committee form a partnership. The Committee depends on the investigations undertaken by the National Audit Office, but we go beyond them and report to Parliament. Every year, we discuss the programme of the National Audit Office in the Committee; we discuss matters that concern and interest us and we make suggestions about matters that deserve further examination.

The creation of the National Audit Office in 1983 was of enormous importance. It has changed the whole basis of the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and his team. Of course, the distinguished Comptroller and Auditor General appointed before that time—in 1982—was Sir Gordon Downey, who is due to retire at the end of this year. His career was spent mainly in the Treasury, and at one time he was deputy head of the central policy review staff. So he covered the six years that included the transition from the Exchequer and Audit Department to the new National Audit Office, which was brought in by the National Audit Act 1983. He has been a distinguished civil servant and has become an even more distinguished Comptroller and Auditor General. He is an Officer of the House, and the House feels enormous gratitude for the work that he has done. The Public Accounts Committee feels deeply indebted to him for the way in which he carries out his work and has effected the transition. Instead of the bare, minimal notes to the appropriation accounts, we now have these reports which go into the matters under discussion thoroughly and enable us to understand the activity of the Department with which we are concerned.

The National Audit Office has substantially increased the number of reports dealing with value for money, and we expect that about half of its reports in the future will deal with that subject, thus ensuring that all areas of central Government are investigated regularly. Of course, there are two aspects to the work of the National Audit Office. We want value for money but, even more important, there is a need to ensure that when Parliament votes certain moneys they go to the persons to whom Parliament intends they should go and are spent for the purposes that Parliament intends. That is the crucial aspect that we have to control; nothing comes before it. We know full well, by reference to many other countries, that once people become involved in fraud and corruption, and they take hold in a country, department, activity or office, it is extremely difficult — sometimes almost impossible—to root them out.

We take our responsibilities seriously. We know full well that, having satisfied ourselves as far as we can that things are going according to principles that we lay down, other matters pertaining to value for money are of great importance.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman's outstanding work. Will he confirm that it should be well understood outside the House that the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General is his report, and that that of the Public Accounts Committee is ours — and that they are by no means always the same?

Mr. Sheldon: I fully accept that; I was going to deal with the important difference between those reports. One is the investigation which takes place within the Department or activity concerned, and which lays out the facts, as they have been agreed, between the National Audit Office and the Department or organisation that it is investigating. Our report examines the role of the people concerned and makes our judgments upon them.

We have one big advantage that many people outside the House do not fully appreciate. It is that we are able not only to examine but to make recommendations. If those recommendations are not adhered to, not only do we have a debate such as this in the House, but we can ask civil servants or accounting officers to return to the Committee and give us their reasons why they have not carried out certain matters. The important aspect of this is well known in the Civil Service. It is that those concerned know full well that their reputation as responsible, active and fully adequate civil servants depends to a considerable extent upon the way in which they follow the wishes of the Public Accounts Committee about the way in which they should dispose of taxpayers' money. It is right that they should be influenced by our judgment on important matters like this.

The one thing that we know about the Civil Service is that it has a superb grapevine and that the information available to one Department rapidly spreads throughout the service. The abilities of the people who come before us and the way in which they have accounted for public money is soon understood and known throughout the Civil Service.

The National Audit Office has produced improved financial management systems in Government. It now has a more professional staff. Many years ago when I was a new member on the Public Accounts Committee the paucity, almost the absence, of accountants in the old Exchequer and Audit Department was astonishing. Nowadays most of the people responsible for accounts have professional qualifications. Of course, that brings problems because they are much more attracted to the private sector, to the private accountancy firms. However, the fact that so many are moving from the National Audit Office to private firms—although that brings problems of wastage and extra recruitment — is at least an indication that we have people who are respected and acknowledged throughout the accountancy profession.

The National Audit Office has moved to new accommodation. It was a good purchase that was well carried out, the accommodation is well used, and it has

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brought most of the London National Audit Officer staff together. It is most important that the National Audit Office is independent of the Civil Service because, of course, it is now responsible to the House. We must understand the nature of that relationship. Matters such as recruitment and pay are dealt with by the National Audit Office supervised by the Public Accounts Commission and advice is tendered by the Public Accounts Committee. Therefore, it has an independent role and it is right that that should be so, given that it examines the work of Government and the expenditure of money by Government.

The new Comptroller and Auditor General is soon to be appointed by a motion for addressing the House, to be moved by the Prime Minister with my agreement as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I could hardly finish this part of my speech without thanking the Clerk to the Committee, Simon Patrick, and the previous clerk, John Rose.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office is also part of our responsibility. Its expenditure is much less, but it faces all the problems of the United Kingdom Departments together with other problems that are unique to the Province. Denis Calvert, the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland, and his staff do a valuable job. Staff wastage was high, but has now been reduced and performance-related pay has been introduced. I should like to speak about the assistance of the Treasury Officers of Account. Clifford Judd has retired and has been replaced by John Beastall. In Northern Ireland Brian Lyttle has been replaced by Mr. Small. I am grateful for their help.

Now perhaps I can deal with the reports. I frequently consider the number of reports that we have produced to the House. In 1985-86, there were 52 and in 1986-87 there were 19 because of the election. Of course, we have the reports that are before the House today. We produce a substantial number of reports, but it is important that the National Audit Office should itself examine fairly frequently areas of Government expenditure in order to ensure continuity and so that the Government Departments, accounting officers and people responsible for expenditure know full well that at any time the National Audit Office can make its inquiries.

If we dealt with a few reports at greater length, I am not sure how much better those reports would be. There would certainly be a feeling among those responsible for the spending of public money that the next time round for reports was some years hence, and the incentive to improve and maintain the better sytems might not be the same. The value-for-money reports, which are expected to reach 50 a year by 1992, will mean an extra weight of work on the Committee. Given that extra number of reports, the Committee will sometimes follow up the less important ones through written rather than oral questions. I am grateful for the dedication of members of the Committee for the way in which they assiduously read the mountain of papers, and for the way in which the questioning proceeds.

Every year we hope and claim that, some time in the future, we shall be able to give the National Audit Office the right to go into the accounts of the nationalised industries and to be present in those industries. Unfortunately, that was not in the legislation in 1983, but at some future date I think that the House will realise that it is important so to proceed to be able to follow public money. It should not be necessary to follow it into every area, and carry out investigations, but it is certainly important to follow it into some of the more important areas. The Public Accounts Committee has the understanding, the ability and the financial and commercial expertise that will be valuable for such examinations.

Anybody who travels abroad knows full well the reputation of our Parliament and of our Civil Service. We play a part in making one accountable to the other. We make our highly regarded Civil Service accountable to the House. One feature of the past two or three years has been the large number of people coming from overseas to look at the work of the Public Accounts Committee. It is becoming almost embarrassing because we have to arrange for colleagues to deal with the number of inquiries and visitors who at times arrive almost weekly and who want to know how we are now carrying out our work. Our international standing is a source of considerable satisfaction.

We are responsible for examining the expenditure of a large part of the £140 billion to £150 billion of public money. As I said, we carry out certification work to make sure that the money goes for the purposes that Parliament intends and to the people that Parliament intends. The value-for-money side of our activities has three elements — economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Economy means paying no more than is required for the goods or services that are needed. Efficiency means getting the best results for the money that is expended, even though at times that may mean more money if that will give a higher output or better results. Effectiveness means the best way of achieving the aims of policy. It is not our duty to question the policies of the Government and that is how we maintain our unanimity. However, we are interested and anxious to ensure that the best ways of achieving those policies are undertaken.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My right hon. Friend speaks about effectiveness. Does he accept that on occasions many political matters arise when we examine the effectiveness of the use of public money? Is it fair to say that in our reports we sometimes have to reflect that by perhaps not being as vigorous as we might otherwise be?

Mr. Sheldon: The Committee consists of hon. Members who understand the matters well. We know that there are areas into which we cannot go because they involve the province of Government. The Government have been elected and have the right, subject to the will of the House, to carry out their policies. Our task is to ensure that they do so effectively. In the end it is simpler than might be thought. My colleagues will agree that when anyone appears before the Committee we ask for a simple statement of objectives. A Department may have in mind the spending of a certain sum of money and we ask it to state its objectives clearly and in numerical terms where possible. Then we ask it to monitor progress.

Objectives can, and do, change in the light of changed circumstances. A Department should know at a certain stage how far it has got and what it has achieved for its expenditure. At the end of the day—maybe a year, two years or even five years later—we will ask what the

Department has achieved. We want to be able to compare objectives with achievements. At the start of a programme, the Committee says that a Department should know exactly where it stands and what it hopes to produce at the end. It may seem elementary to compare expectation with performance. It should be standard practice to quantify where possible and to set phased dates for examination. That is easy but it is often missed.

We have had some terrible examples where that has not happened, but fortunately nothing as horrendous as occurred a couple of years ago with premature retirement. I am glad that I have not had to update that example. Hon. Members may recall that there were premature retirements in the National Health Service. The Government decided that there were too many administrators and rightly offered incentives to administrators to leave the service. Of course, they paid them certain sums of money. But there was no assessment of how many would leave, how much it would cost and in what regions people would leave. As a result, in the north-east a few left and in the west large numbers left. At the end the Government did not know how much had been spent, how many had gone and, worst of all, how many had returned. I hope I shall never need to update that example. It is generally known now that we demand information in advance and that it is upon that information that Departments may proceed.

The Committee has drawn particular attention to five reports which we thought would be of general interest. Certain aspects of other reports are important but the Committee felt that we should concentrate on these five.

The 19th report, 1985-86, deals with expenditure on motorways and trunk roads. The Department of Transport spends £800 million a year on motorways; local authorities spend £1,500 million on other roads. Those who drive round the country—I suppose there are not many who drive much more than we do—will know that the coning of roads and motorways is a major scandal. We may sit in our cars for up to an hour on occasions. I am not talking about the adequacy of roads. There are constraints on expenditure but traffic jams have a cost in lives as well as in time. Expenditure on roads has not been efficient or effective.

In paragraph 17, we say that the Department of Transport

"accepted that comparisons between estimated and actual traffic flows were an important factor in cost benefit analysis and back-checking the relevant assumptions and results. They admitted that they had not carried out the subsequent checks they should have done".

That is of enormous importance. Unless a Department compares what it hoped to achieve with the result it will not learn much. We thought that the failure to carry out back checking was wrong.

We were pleased about the suggestion of lane rentals, whereby contractors responsible for road maintenance or repair should pay a certain rental. We hope that the Financial Secretary can give us further information. It seemed to be a useful way of ensuring that the work was carried out efficiently and economically.

In paragraph 23, we said:

"We consider it most unsatisfactory that maintenance of roads has been starved of funds for many years. . . . We consider it imperative that they should maintain roads in good repair and avoid the need for premature and extremely expensive reconstruction of either motorways or trunk roads due to lack of timely maintenance."

Often, because of failure to maintain roads and to spend a little money earlier, much more expenditure on repairs has to be undertaken subsequently.

In paragraph 24, we say:

"Alterations to motorways after construction carry a disproportionate cost—the later addition of crash barriers, the later addition of lighting, the widening of former two lane motorways to three lane, all carry additional costs out of proportion to the cost of including these facilities originally."

The inadequate roads that result from lack of forethought have disastrous effects through delays and loss of life. Too many motorways have been inadequately designed and poorly built, and protracted repairs take months or even years.

The 25th report deals with the prison building programme. In 1979 the May committee suggested 3,400 refurbished places in 16 prisons, costing about £360 million. The aim was to match places with the prison population by the end of the decade. That was a clear objective which we welcomed and we look forward to its implementation in due course. In the report, we say that "the challenging target set in 1983 has now become an even tougher one."

That was matching places with prison population by the end of the decade. We continued:

"In view of the Home Office's failure to build the types of prisons most urgently required and in the right locations, the difficulties and delays suffered with particular projects—including cases where buildings have been kept out of use even after completion — and the uncertainties caused by the difficulty in projecting the size of the prison population, we believe achievement of the target is in doubt."

A year or so after that report, we think that it is even more in doubt. In paragraph 29, we said that after the end of the decade there would

"still be overcrowding in some prisons, and that large amounts of substandard accommodation will remain in use."

In paragraph 30, we said:

"It gives us great cause for concern that in 1991"—

the end of this programme—

"there will still be just under 20,000 cells without integral sanitation."

It is deplorable that after a programme of expenditure, development and refurbishment almost 20,000 cells are without integral sanitation. The original programme was not as well thought out as it ought to have been.

The 44th report deals with preventive medicine, the cost of which is reckoned to be some £600 million. That figure was suggested by research into expenditure on preventive medicine by the National Health Service. The Committee dealt with two aspects of preventive medicine, cervical cancer and other preventable diseases such as rubella, measles and whooping cough. The failure to undertake the call and recall system is inadequate. I quote from paragraph 23, where the Committee noted the Department's

"frank admission as to why so little progress has been made in reducing the number of deaths from cervical cancer."

Bearing in mind that the programme was introduced almost 20 years ago, and the recommendations of the committee for gynaecological cytology between 1979 and 1981 regarding call and recall arrangements, we say:

"it is deplorable in our view that it has taken so long to institute comprehensive arrangements for an effective screening programme."

This was brought home to me on Friday of last week when I heard of one of my constituents who had an examination in a hospital outside my area and something was found to be wrong, but she was not recalled. She has only now found out that she has cancer, and she is now in a hospital

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in my constituency. That is awful, because that person felt a confidence that was completely unwarranted, which is much worse than not having had the test at all. At least if she had not had the test she would have been on the lookout for signs and symptoms to a greater degree than she was.

The past 20 years have been spent badly, in that essential work had not been carried out. I am pleased to note that this has improved in the past year and I understand that it will be put right by the summer of next year, but I wait to hear what the Financial Secretary might say about that.

The 45th report concerns the Metropolitan police. The investigation was unusual because, if we did not have the National Audit Office, the matter might not have been investigated in the same way. It was valuable to undertake the questioning of the Receiver, who is responsible for expenditure by the Metropolitan police, Mr. Alec Gordon-Brown. We note that:

"accountability to Parliament operates primarily through the Home Office, with little direct accountability by the Met P."

We point out that the quality and form of information provided to Parliament on the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and performance of the Metropolitan police is clearly unsatisfactory.

Paragraph 29 refers to the overtime worked. We all know that the Metropolitan police have to undertake much overtime when emergencies and other activities demand, but it is difficult to ensure that overtime is worked only when it is essential and efficient to do so. Overtime is currently costing the Metropolitan police some £50 million a year and there is little assurance that it is under very close control. After questioning Mr. Alec Gordon-Brown, it was the Committee's unanimous view that his responses were far from satisfactory. The report continues:

"so the potential savings to be achieved through more positive and effective systems of control could well be substantial. We therefore welcome the current and proposed research into how, why and when overtime is worked."

We know that when emergencies occur these matters are not considered, as they might be at a more relaxed time. Nevertheless, taking those matters into account, the Committee's view was that this is disturbing. Finally, we say that we are concerned over inadequacies and delays in the Metropolitan police manpower reviews and ask for an improvement of the review arrangements to provide the necessary justification for the existing and proposed manpower levels of both police and civil staff. One would have thought that this should have been done, and we regret that it was not.

The 50th report deals with vehicle excise duty evasion, which was estimated to cost about £100 million in 1985-86. Over the past few years, despite increased efforts, no significant reduction has been made. We know that it is difficult to trace owners. Of over 1 million cases notified, only 30 per cent. were prosecuted. This is very unsatisfactory, but we understand the difficulties. More than two thirds of those people caught committing the offence of not having a vehicle excise duty licence are not prosecuted, and the fines imposed on those who go to court are ludicrous. The average fine is £47 and the licence costs £100. The maximum fine is £500. We do not know what percentage of those who commit the offence are caught, but of the people who are caught their chances of being prosecuted are only 30 per cent., and the averge fine is only £47. Ministers would like to see the fines increased, but it is up to the courts to decide those matters. We can only send out a signal to the courts that we wish to see increased fines imposed on those convicted.

We endorse the Department's view on this matter and ask that our concern be brought to the attention of the Home Office and the Magistrates' Association. Such widespread evasion at such little risk must not continue. Those who undertake the running of a car, with the attendant high costs and responsibilities of its ownership and running, must be prepared to pay the vehicle excise duty.

The 26th report deals with fraud and corruption. The Committee takes a serious view of matters which involve losses. In 1984-85 the Home Office wrote off losses of £17·3 million and bad debts of £1 million. In 1983 allegations were made about the dealings of the directorate of prison industries and farms with one particular company which was subsequently the cause of a loss of £15 million, which is noted in the accounts. That concerned work undertaken by those serving sentences of imprisonment, producing toys, among other things. As a result, six officials were suspended from duty and charges of corruption were made against three of them, although they were subsequently acquitted. Two of the suspended officials retired early and the other four resigned.

Nevertheless, the directorate accepted that there had been too close a relationship between some members of its staff and some of the contractors. It told us that it was taking rigorous action to strengthen its defences against fraud and corruption by every possible means and had made that clear to staff by training, instruction and example. That is of great importance.

Leaving aside allegations of fraud and corruption, of which the defendants were acquitted by the courts, there has clearly been incompetence and serious failures to meet necessary standards in performance amounting to substantial negligence in a number of cases. In such circumstances, to be able to resign without financial penalty, or to retire early and to receive enhancement of pension entitlement, seems indefensible and we expressed our strong disapproval of that.

As I said, in our report we take a most serious view of even a suspicion of fraud and corruption in the conduct of public business. The lack of proper supervision and control makes it more difficult to establish the facts in those cases where fraud and corruption were suspected, but not proved. I hope that it will stand as a statement of the view of the Public Accounts Committee when we say:

"We will always expect, and indeed demand, the most scrupulous standards of behaviour from all public servants; and we welcome the action taken by the Home Office to ensure in future the highest standards of conduct by their staff in relations with contractors."

I do not need to go into Lear Fan in great detail because it deals with a number of the problems that we had with the De Lorean case. In fact, it almost overlapped it. The question really is — it is an important one for the Administration — how we deal with high-risk areas of activity. Governments cannot be immune from dealing with these high-risk areas, but, because of the importance of maintaining the position of public money and our concern quite naturally for the expenditure of that money, we need to have rather different rules from those in the private sector.

The private sector can taken a number of risks. It gains some and loses some. If it gains more than it loses, or substantially more than it loses, that is acceptable, but losses must be justified much more fully and accurately when dealing with public money and we make that point strongly.

In this case £56 million was lost. Whereas with De Lorean there were only 50 days of appraisal, in Lear Fan there were 18 months of appraisal. Of course, there was the matter of job creation in Northern Ireland—something that all of us would wish to see. The quality of management is a major cause of failure. It is important that the House realises the importance of the Downey principles, one of the most important of which is that one does not give money and then more money when it is needed, or even examine the matter when the initial tranche runs out, to see if more is needed. Certain phases must be set in advance. One says when the matter should be reviewed and that no more money will be available until a certain period. So often, by the time more money has been requested and the latest report and accounts have been produced and analysed, the situation has moved on. Therefore, one is never given the exact information at the time a decision has to be made. The only way to proceed is by the phases which form an important part of the Downey principles.

Yet again, we had the role of nominee directors. Our report on nominee directors has been debated in the House. We showed how they need to ensure that they undertake their responsibilities. It is not the sort of job that so many people thought it was several years ago. It is a responsible job, acting on behalf of the Government or the agency. We draw those conclusions again.

The cost of legal aid, which is dealt with in the 32nd report, is not cash limited. In 1979-80 it cost Britain £87 million to provide legal aid. That had risen to £263 million in 1984-85. The Law Society administers legal aid on behalf of the Lord Chancellor's Department. We were assured that there was no conflict of interest here, but we were not satisfied. We say:

"It is clearly important that an adequate separation of duties should be maintained to ensure that those with specific responsibility for the administration of legal aid should remain separate from those whose role it is to negotiate the remuneration of the profession."

That seems obvious. We are dealing with a professional body of high standards, but when one takes into account the opportunities for fraud, it is clearly important that those with responsibility for the administration of the expenditure of money should be separate from those who negotiate remuneration. We had no doubt about the high standing of the people who came before us, but, clearly, there cannot be, and must not continue to be, this conflict of interest. Of course, there was no question of those responsible operating with other than the highest principles, but the general view still remained.

We go on to say:

"We were astonished that neither the Lord Chancellor's Department"—

we do not use such words frequently; the Public Accounts Committee is noted for its restrained use of language, so such florid language is used only when we are picking out particular examples—

"nor the Law Society had the management information to identify precisely the causes of the increase in legal aid expenditure over the years . . . There must be a serious doubt as to whether all abuse of legal aid is being identified and reported; the Law Society must ensure that there are effective checks".

We found that only three cases of abuse had been reported. Of course it is an honourable profession. We asked Sir Derek Oulton, the accounting officer, how he was dealing with the matter and he said:

"We are always . . . exceedingly anxious about abuse of legal aid."

It does not matter how good a profession is, we thought that three cases were an understatement of the sort of abuses that we thought were likely to occur.

Then we went on to deal with green forms. Green forms cost about £1 million. They are a means of dealing with small matters where advice can quickly be given. They are most valuable and useful and everybody would want to see an increase of that kind of advice. In 1973-74 £1 million was spent, and 10 years later £44 million was spent. Some people have described it as the printing of £50 notes and the back-up was quite inadequate.

We say in our recommendations:

"We are concerned at the very large rise in green form expenditure".

I think that we were right to be concerned; we believed that the scheme was a possible area of abuse. We recommended "pending the outcome of research into the scope of the scheme . . . redesign of the form to provide a greater degree of control."

We also advise a system of spot checks. However valuable, right and proper the motives where public money is concerned, they cannot excuse lack of control and a failure to ensure that that money is safeguarded. We were pleased to note in the Treasury minute that the report of the efficiency scrutiny investigation recommends the virtual abolition of the green form scheme in its present form. We also note that the Law Society is re-examining the matter and making early proposals for spot checks. We welcome that, as the service is clearly valuable, and we would not wish for its limitation through any wrongful use.

The 40th report deals with the torpedo programme. So much of that programme was summed up in question number 2390, asked by the hon. Member for Horsham. He said:

"We have so far spent £5,000 million on torpedoes."

Earlier, he commented:

"One of the interesting things, looking at the record of the torpedo programme, is that it would appear that had we chosen to buy the American torpedoes we would have saved ourselves a great deal of money."

Even in these more profligate days, £5 billion is an enormous amount to spend. It should be possible to buy an enormous quantity of weaponry, approching the ultimate weapon, for that amount. For a fraction of the cost, we could have bought something off the shelf which would have performed satisfactorily. I fear that that does not apply to all of our expenditure nowadays. We have retained a close and continuing interest in such expenditure, and will be returning to it again and again.

My next subject concerns a small amount of money: however, the small amounts often produce the principles. The 49th report deals with service movements. The services spend a considerable amount on vehicles and on the movement of personnel, stores and equipment, moving them around the country and overseas. They pay the commercial carriers, because not everything is dealt with in-service; there are operators who act on behalf of the various services. A total of £84 million was spent outside

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the services on the movement of stores and equipment, and £130 million was spent on personnel. To our astonishment, we found that the Government freight agent — which happens to be Hogg Robinson—had been chosen on an exchange of letters, with no competition, in 1870, and that that contract had been continued without any further discussion or competition. When I came to the Public Accounts Committee, I thought that all those skeletons had long since been discovered and reinterred. I hope that, if any civil servants ever hear about this, and if they know of any similar "skeleton", they will bring it out of the cupboard there and then.

The facts are appalling. We spent £15 million a year on the Government freight agent. The Ministry of Defence has told us that it considered that it was obtaining value for money; I am not sure how it was able to define that in the absence of competition. What we want, and persistently demand, are competitive contracts wherever possible. No one can doubt that it is the easiest thing in the world to obtain such a contract—to go out of one office and into another. I am sure that that will come to be accepted. If it is not, however, we shall exercise our only power which is to ask for a justification of such action —or perhaps, in this instance, inaction.

Our 52nd report deals with mortgage interest relief at source. In 1984-85, MIRAS cost the country £3·5 billion —it costs rather more now — and we commented on what we considered a serious amount of abuse. Paragraph 16 states:

"Inland Revenue told us that statistical information suggested that home improvement loans could have accounted for MIRAS of between £250 million and £500 million in 1985-86."

The Treasury minute now says that the figure may be as low as £1 million. We do not know whether that is the case. However, the important point is the inability to know how much has been spent, or misspent.

The Inland Revenue felt that a more effective deterrent than carrying out a full examination of the receipts for such expenditure would be a few timely and well-chosen prosecutions, as a result of sample checks. The Revenue admitted, however, that no prosecutions had so far been instigated, although investigations into a few suspect cases were being pursued intensively. We felt that there were likely to be more rather than fewer such evasions, and we did not understand why the Inland Revenue was reluctant to require receipts in support of mortgage relief for home improvement loans. We thought that, if a duty were placed on the lender to obtain and keep the evidence, it might be more effective in reducing the scale of evasion. After all, so many people have to do that in regard to far smaller expenditure. Stories of people going on holiday on the proceeds of the new extension to their homes became legion about a year ago, and I am not sure that the reliability of such stories has been much reduced.

The sixth report concerns the Session 1986-87, and is rather more important. It deals with expenditure on major equipment. An annual amount of £1·6 billion is spent on major equipment for the armed services. We know full well that the cancellation of Nimrod represented about £1 billion, and that there were problems with cost-plus contracts. We were particularly concerned about serious failures to introduce competition when it could have been introduced. However, the Ministry of Defence assured us that it was now acting on the main lessons that it had learnt. It was no longer allowing cost-plus contracts without a ceiling, was placing project management responsibility on the contractor and was insisting on having one identifiable body as prime contractor. We found that reaction most encouraging.

We noted the particular problem of cost-plus, and that it had been operated without a ceiling. We also noted what had been called "gold plating", which, as defined by the Ministry of Defence, meant having rather exacting specifications that might not be necessary. We regard that seriously, because in so many cases exacting specifications —while giving security to the people who produce the contract, or the specification — might lead to the contract turning out to be rather more expensive than it should be.

I must refer to the comments of Mr. Levene, the Chief of Defence Procurement, in answer to my question 428, about competitive contracts. Mr. Levene was referring to the way in which contracts are let and to the fact that modifications need to be kept to a minimum. He said:

"One of our contractors was telling me the other day that he had this wonderful new system for incorporation into tanks — which may well be a very good system. Nevertheless, he had gone to the prime contractor and said he had this new system which he would like them to incorporate in the tanks. The prime contractor said to him 'Look, I have a fixed-price contract, I have a penalty clause, I have to deliver on time and on cost and unless you are prepared to underwrite the whole of the potential cost of delay both in time and money for the programme please go away.' I might be criticised for this but I have to tell you that I regarded that as one of the most helpful things I have heard for a very long time. That was an unsolicited comment and of course came through as a complaint. If you want to get rid of 'gold plating' — and I think we all agree that it is unfortunate that it has come about so often—there will be times when you may miss out on something but it is a small price to pay for getting equipment on time and on cost, that works perhaps to a slightly lesser specification but at least it works and you have not overpaid for it."

Mr. Levene said that he might be criticised, but the exact opposite occurred. He was highly commended. We thought that his comments were most encouraging. The introduction of competition, wherever possible, has been most valuable for the Ministry of Defence. We hope that there will be competition for sub-contracts, even when there cannot be competition for the main contract, because there is only one main contractor. There is a new feeling of cash flow discipline within the Ministry of Defence.

Those with a commercial or an industrial background know full well that the one great discipline in the private sector is the ability to ensure that the cash flow is reasonably right. However, that problem does not affect the Government in quite the same way. They do not have the same cash flow problems as the private sector. Their valuable weapon is that if performance and price are not obtained they can cut the cash flow at the place where it hurts. We were very encouraged to hear that. We hope that it will be reflected in the work, the expenditure on, and the performance of the various weapons systems that we investigated.

Financial reporting to Parliament is a matter that concerns very few people, because very few people know much about it. However, we believe that it is important. Therefore, we asked for annual reports to be provided, setting out the work of a number of Departments. We have emphasised the importance that we attach to Parliament being provided with information on performance,

efficiency and effectiveness. So long as the Estimates continue to be the formal basis for the granting of Supply by Parliament, it is essential that there should be a simple and direct correlation between them and information in the public expenditure White Paper on departmental objectives, performance and output.

We recognise the difficulties, but the major Government instruments for bringing expenditure to the attention of the House are the public expenditure White Paper, the Estimates and the appropriation accounts. The appropriation accounts come at the end of a very long line. They deal with the amount of money that has been granted. It will be a long time, therefore, before we can incorporate that information. However, we can make some movement towards a direct correlation between the Estimates and the public expenditure White Paper. At some stage in the future it may be possible to bring them much closer together. We notice that in their Treasury minute the Government have agreed to the bringing together of the public expenditure White Paper and the Estimates. We hope that in due course those aspects will be incorporated.

The financial management initiative began in May 1982, with the aim of improving the allocation, management and control of resources. The aim of that initiative is to obtain value for money at different levels. Its objectives are to find out what can be achieved, when it can be achieved and at what cost. We welcome that initiative. The attribution of responsibility is crucial. We have to identify who is successful and then reward him. Also we have to identify who is not successful and then take the appropriate action. Some objectives and some outputs cannot easily be quantified, but wherever possible there should be some quantification. Furthermore, there should be some statement of objectives. It is important to maintain the momentum. Therefore, we shall continue our studies.

I have already said that money must go where Parliament intended it to go. I am sure that there will be reports in the media tomorrow that the House was not so full as it might have been for this debate, even though it is one of the most important debates of the year. I am not disappointed. If the House thought that the Public Accounts Committee was failing to investigate what is happening and what is wrong, the Chamber would be crowded. However, the House has confidence in the work of my colleagues. So long as that confidence remains, my colleagues will do their best to pursue effectively their investigations on behalf of the House of Commons and the taxpayer.

6.27 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): My first duty must be to say on behalf of all members of the Public Accounts Committee a very big thank you to our continuing Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I am very glad that he is continuing in his office. He has worked tremendously hard during a period of great development in the work of the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office, arising out of the 1983 Act. These developments could not have taken place under a better Chairman.

The right hon. Gentleman's speech ranged very wide. That was natural, because the subject of the debate is very wide. I do not intend to go into such great detail, but I take up his concluding words: that if the Public Accounts Committee was not doing its duty, the House would probably have been full. I am an accountant, and I remember that one could foresee the sort of annual general meeting a client would have by the company results. If the results were sound and the company was doing well, everybody had confidence in the leadership of the company, nobody bothered to turn up at the annual general meeting and it was over in five minutes. If, alas, things were going ill, it was different—everybody turned up and wanted to know what was wrong. I am glad to say that it appears that we are doing our job well and to the reasonable satisfaction — I shall not put it any higher than that—of the rest of the House.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred, rightly — we are looking at papers that we considered in the last Parliament—to colleagues who are no longer with us. Some have moved on to higher and better things, like my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). Others have left the House voluntarily or because of the vagaries of the political system. None the less, all of them contributed to what we were doing. Names that come to mind are Mr. Deakins, Mr. Frederick Silvester, Mr. Park, Mr. Cockeram, and others who for the moment escape my mind. They all played a part in the examination of witnesses and preparation of reports.

I am pleased with the quality of their replacements. In forthcoming years we shall enhance our reputation and produce results of benefit to the House and to the Government. The new Members come with good reputations in the House, and with a wide experience in the House and elsewhere.

I shall deal with one or two of the reports only. They reinforce the general theme of our investigations, as set out by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. First, the 19th report — it is curious that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and I should choose to start with the same report—concerns road maintenance. We are forcefully reminded about road maintenance as we come here from our respective constituencies. A serious lesson, not only with regard to the need for good roads, emerged clearly from the report: there is a need for continuity of programmes and for constant monitoring. When looking through the reports, and at our more recent work, it is curious that the word "monitoring" seems to come more and more into what we are seeking to do.

As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said, it is no good setting up a process, putting money into it and then letting it go. The programme must be constantly monitored, and one must ensure that it is matched so that it can be monitored. The same applies to the road motorway scheme. It is obviously better not to carry out the motorway scheme in fits and starts, with a little being spent one year and a lot in another. It must be a task of good government to spread a programme steadily so that the work force is continually in work, carrying out the programme.

That is the case with regard to maintenance. Sir Peter Lazarus gave evidence to the Committee. His comments were significant and I am often reminded of them as I pass through coned areas when travelling to and from Yorkshire. On page 5 of the evidence, he is reported as having said:

"We shall deal with the backlog on motorways within the next six years and that is the right timetable from our point of view. The aim, taking a long term look, is to maintain

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about 5 per cent. of motorways every year—that is capital maintenance, either putting down an overlay or, if it is necessary, doing major reconstruction — that is about 70 miles. We reckon that if we do 80 miles we shall catch up over six years and that if we do more than 80 miles"—

by that I understand him to mean do the 80 miles and other certain urgent work—

" . . . that is about as much as we ought to do without imposing unreasonable delays on those who use the roads."

That is the stark need that is apparent when we go up and down the motorway — the need for planning and the consequences of not planning and carrying out maintenance as and when it should be done. Clearly, the inconvenience to motorists is considerable, and will be so until the backlog has been brought up to date, when we can consider what Sir Peter Lazarus described as the tolerable repair programme.

The other point that Sir Peter Lazarus made was that if repairs are not done within the proper time the consequences are vastly expensive. Instead of being able to put in a 7 in or 8 in overlay on the ground the road must be dug up altogether. From what I have seen on my journeys, that is what has been happening recently, and we do not want it to happen again.

The 25th report of the House deals with the prison building programme. Over the years the quality of building, and the upsets during the course of the building and over the early years of operation seem to recur in varying forms in so many of our investigations. Here it is highlighted with regard to prisons. Paragraph VI on page xviii says:

"The Home Office and the PSA have built some prisons of basically poor design"—

one is reminded of words that were said outside the Chamber on the subject of early design in the post-war period; I am sure that they are relevant to prison designs—

"using unsuitable sites because they were the only ones readily available. Designs have been changed, giving rise to extra cost and delay. There have been design and building defects on which the Departments were slow to take action because of poor appraisal and feedback arrangements. Some past faults are giving rise to excessive staff costs or buildings that cannot be used."

If one goes through all the questioning that went on in Committee, those features are all too apparent; we condemn those failures. However, the failures have been present right from the beginning. Conclusion viii says:

"We are concerned at various instances of difficulties involving consultants engaged by PSA. Consultants should be carefully vetted at the time of engagement and thoroughly briefed, their contracts should be tightly drawn and their performance assiduously monitored, and if they do fall down on the job due redress should be obtained."

That is a criticism of the contractors, but in all too many cases it is a criticism of the Department for not laying down clear guidelines as to exactly what it wants. In fairness to the contractors and the public purse, that is a lesson that is slowly being learnt, but it must be learnt if there is to be efficient contracting within the service.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Has my hon. Friend applied his mind to the question whether it is necessary, when the Department of Transport is planning original motorways or maintaining or rebuilding motorways, to involve the Property Services Agency? Would it be possible, in the cases that my hon. Friend has described, for the Department of Transport to deal direct with the consultants or with the constructors?

Sir Michael Shaw: That is a very interesting question. No doubt my hon. Friend will raise it many times during our discussions in the Public Accounts Committee. Indeed, we have raised such questions before. So far, the decision in various areas has been that it would be better for action to proceed through the PSA. I do not have a closed mind on this matter. We must continually question the future of the PSA. That may well be a matter for later consideration.

I remember a very unusual occasion which I thought the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne was going to refer to, but in fact he referred to another. It resulted in an immediate resignation in connection with the PSA because of the difficulties that we had discovered. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is right to raise this question. I hope that he will continue to examine this matter very closely with an open mind and with his usual acute observation. Contracts should not automatically go to the PSA. They should go to the PSA only if it proves that it is worthy of the contract.

I return to my point about clearly setting out the objectives before Government money is committed. We must set out the objectives to state exactly what is wanted. At the same time, we must ensure that arrangements are made to control the expenditure of the money and monitor whatever enterprise has been set up as a result. It is absolutely essential to discover what was originally wanted and whether it was achieved at the price originally envisaged. That is one of our main tasks.

The 11th report from the PAC refers to National Health Service manpower. Obviously that affects many people as many people rightly are worried about Health Service manpower. We have been watching it for some time with considerable concern, as the report discloses. Page xii states:

"We note that since we took evidence from the Department, the review body on nurses' pay has reported and its recommendations have been accepted."

That is history now. However, that happened as a result of our expressing concern at the present acute shortages of nursing staff in some areas. Obviously we shall have to consider that matter again in the near future.

The 11th report is very important. It shows that our comments and criticisms are relevant to matters of great concern to the public. I have said that we shall return to that matter and it is clearly one of our jobs to return to our reports, and to the responses from the Treasury to ensure that our recommendations are carried out. At the same time, it is just as important that as we monitor them, so they should monitor their own actions. Our work will then be lightened and, if any faults arise, they will be caught at an earlier stage.

I now want to consider the Welsh Development Agency. I refer to the WDA as an example of Departments monitoring themselves. We have not yet published all the evidence about what happens. We will do that one of these days, but for the moment we have not done so and I will leave it at that. What of our recommendations about the Welsh Development Agency? In the preamble to the seventh report we state:

"We took evidence in June 1986 from the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency on investment in industry

undertaken by the Agency. We had decided not to publish this evidence at the present time, though we hope to do so later together with a full account of our findings."

We then give some general conclusions. Conclusion (d) states:

"For a major investment WDA should insist, before completion of an agreement when its influence is greatest, on the creation of a competent and balanced management team for the investee company."

We may think that that is common sense, but it does not exist. Conclusion (e) states:

"Where monitoring officers take over existing cases it should be regarded as a fundamental necessity for subsequent monitoring that they make themselves fully conversant with the case by a thorough review of the relevant papers."

An outsider may think that it is astonishing to have to include such a recommendation. However, it was absolutely essential. Conclusion (g) states:

"The Agency should take all possible steps to avoid a situation where substantial additional funds are put into an investee company at short notice on the basis of company projections that have not been independently validated."

It is right that that should be avoided according to the examples that we saw.

Common sense is not a common virtue. It must be inculcated and the disciplines that flow from it must be placed there by the Departments to ensure that value for money is achieved. The other day—and I will not go into details and names—I had cause to question an accounting officer about a certain enterprise into which Government money had been placed. To my surprise, I received a letter from people involved in that enterprise saying that the calibre of those appointed to run the enterprise was far greater than the calibre to be found in the Department and that a detailed involvement by the Department would be a waste of time. I replied:

"I am afraid that my experience on the PAC has taught me that one should never assume that, because matters have been put in the hands of a distinguished board or committee, there is no further need for inquiry".

In many cases—for example, De Lorean, Lear Fan and indeed the WDA—it is no good simply appointing distinguished gentlemen. They may be very good, but we must check that they are. If we do not, we may find that they enjoy the fruits of retirement. That is not the purpose of their appointment. They have a very responsible job. Their purpose is to ensure that Government money, the taxpayers' money, is well spent in the manner for which it was authorised.

I want to consider the amendment in the names of the hon. Members for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). It has not been selected, but we are allowed to discuss it. It is right that we should consider whether today's debate is being approached in the right way.

There is a problem for the future here because our work is becoming more important. We have been very fortunate. We have had a very distinguished Comptroller and Auditor General. Before I forget, I should add that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne—I nearly said my right hon. Friend—has a very distinguished and important part to play at this juncture. I am sure that he will play a worthy part in advising and consulting the Prime Minister about the selection of his successor. I wish him luck in the task that he is to carry out on our behalf.

What are we to do? Are we to seek—as the amendment seems to suggest that we should—to have more frequent debates in the House to deal with specific matters raised in the course of our investigations? That would be one way. Perhaps I am getting too old for this game, but I do not think that we shall get a House full of Members to listen to such debates. Our debates are too complicated, and perhaps we may flatter ourselves that our hon. Friends are glad to leave these matters in our hands. Obviously we need periodic debates, even if they are only once a year, to discuss the state of the nation, as it were, with regard to the Public Accounts Committee and perhaps we could have additional days when necessary.

If we are to make the most of the Public Accounts Committee and the new importance that should be attached to it, we shall have to enhance the Committee's meetings. That must be the way forward. Far more notice is being taken of the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General than of our own reports. If we are to have added importance, we must look to the surroundings in which we work. The PAC sat for the first time in conditions and circumstances very different from those in which we find ourselves today. The workload was very much lighter and the Government expenditure involved was very much less. As our work changes, so must the circumstances in which we meet. In particular, we have the threat of television. I use the word "threat" because I am against the televising of the House.

If we are to be televised, the PAC, our oldest Committee, ought to be televised. We need accommodation and arrangements must be made for us to sit in comfort. We need plenty of room for witnesses and for those who advise them and a proper public gallery. Earlier this week we met in a packed room and those in the gallery had to stand for two hours listening to our discourse. That is wrong. All the new buildings that are going up and all the enlargements that are taking place—if, indeed, they are taking place behind those sheets across the road—ought to be able to accommodate a proper Committee Room for the PAC, catering not only for hon. Members and staff but for witnesses and their advisers, for the public and, if necessary, for television and radio. That is the way forward.

I do not know whether we should have general debates on specific matters in our Committee, and I am not particularly bothered. However, I am concerned that our investigations and proceedings should be made known to the public in every possible way so that their influence and importance can be brought to the fore.

6.54 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) on his speech. I only regret that he stopped so short in his description of the Welsh Development Agency. I was anticipating ever greater revelations on what promises to be a Taffgate. I imagine that if the evidence is published, the public gallery will be packed next time the subject of the Welsh Development Agency appears before the Committee. I follow the hon. Gentleman, too, in saying that the House should clearly consider afresh how best to establish a link between the valuable reports of the Public Accounts Committee, and, indeed, Select Committees in general, and the whole House. There is a great danger of a gulf developing between the valuable work done upstairs and the rather noisier business on the Floor of the House.

This is an evening of consensus and I note that the hon. Gentleman nearly fell into the habit of calling my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the PAC, his "right hon.

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

Friend". Perhaps we should continue in that spirit. On both sides of the House, we must address ourselves to the question of how best to bring the work of Select Committees and the PAC, which is the key Committee of the House, before the whole House.

The Committee's importance lies not only in its reports, valuable though they are, but in the fact that it can potentially throw a searchlight on any aspect of Government. Civil servants everywhere know that they are being watched, and that the PAC is there in the background. The ability of the PAC to throw a searchlight on all corners of Government is perhaps one of its most valuable functions.

Knowing as they do that I represent a constituency which contains the driver vehicle licensing centre, hon. Members will not be surprised if I rehearse some of the comments that I made when the reports of the PAC last came before the House way back in 1985 and examine the 50th report of the PAC, relating to vehicle excise duty. I confess to a certain feeling of déjà vu. In all our debates on the PAC we begin, as we began today, with a magisterial and excellent general report by the Chairman, followed by a number of helpful specialist contributions. There is a danger of covering much the same ground that we covered in the debate in October 1985. However, it is important that we monitor the effectiveness and implementation of the various recommendations made by the Committee in earlier reports. Some of the questions raised in the Committee's earlier report on vehicle excise duty remain to be answered.

It appears from its latest report on vehicle excise duty evasion and enforcement that the Committee is still flirting with the possibility of an alternative to vehicle excise duty. For example, the report says:

"the position on alternatives . . . has not been permanently settled."

It is significant that the whole question of an alternative to vehicle excise duty has been discussed at the highest levels of Government over the past decade. On each occasion, however superficial has been the proposal of a switch to a tax on petrol, it has been rejected by the Government. It looks as though the PAC is tending in the present report to overlook the strength of the positive case for the retention of vehicle excise duty.

A petrol tax would place too big a share of the burden of motoring taxation on high-mileage rural motorists. As the census showed, some of the poorest people in the country live in rural areas and, because of the inadequacy of public transport, are forced to rely on motor vehicles. Of course, the same applies to essential business users. At 1979 prices, more than £100 million a year would have been added to business costs, obviously resulting in higher prices and inflation, had there been this tax on petrol. In addition, abolition of the vehicle excise duty would clearly promote the interests of diesel-driven vehicles, and it could have substantial effects on what remains of the British motor industry.

The present method of collecting vehicle excise duty promotes the accuracy of vehicle records by regularly updating the names and addresses of car owners and vehicle descriptions. It is of considerable importance that such information be kept up to date. Currently, the vehicle record is 95 per cent. accurate. The inaccuracy of the record is caused by unlicensed vehicles. If all the vehicles in the country were to be unlicensed, the record would be substantially more inaccurate. The police are ready to confirm the importance to them of the current system.

Not only is revenue an important aspect of vehicle excise duty but it works as a check that drivers are properly insured and that their vehicles have MOT test certificates and so on. Therefore, it plays a vital function in the fight to improve road safety standards.

Another important advantage of vehicle excise duty relates to the ability to answer inquiries from motor manufacturers regarding recall campaigns which result in the removal of unsafe vehicles from the road. Many current advantages will be lost if VED is abolished. I shall not trespass on the time of the House by stating the staff implications, but they should be a major factor in the Government's consideration.

On the general principle of motor taxation, what appears to be a superficially attractive alternative is unlikely to be so in practice. I counsel the Committee not to drift into the danger of saying that something must be done to make a positive recommendation in respect of an alternative to vehicle excise duty. I remind the Committee of the danger of responding to the "something must be done" syndrome in the light of the unfortunate poll tax precedent. It now hangs like an albatross around the Government's neck, whether it be the tartan precedent of the Bill that is now lumbering its way through the House.

The Committee mentioned the level of evasion. It is certainly true that the gross figures have increased, but they have increased, in part at least, as a result of the increase in duty. The evasion element compares favourably with that in respect of income tax and various customs and excise revenues. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to confirm to the House that the driver vehicle licensing centre is a cost-effective operation. The revenue that it collects—of course, mostly VED—is substantially in excess of £2·5 billion.

If there is a correlation between hon. Members' interest, the grand public's interest and the quality of the product, one may contrast the questions on transport, when there were frequent criticisms of the centre during its teething problems of the 1970s, with the fact that there is now hardly a passing reference to the efficiency of the centre. That has been confirmed by many Transport Ministers, who, as they come and go—they tend to come and go frequently—have visited the centre.

Sir Michael Shaw: At least they have come.

Mr. Anderson: We have with us one coming Minister. May he continue to come for a long time—until the next election, anyway.

I am surprised that the Government said to the Committee that the staff implications are such that there would be only marginal returns in respect of licence evasion if there were to be an increase in staff. That is certainly not the attitude that was adopted earlier. That is not the view of the unions, as one would expect, or of the management of the driver vehicle licensing centre. They think that the bulk of evasion could be eliminated in a cost-effective way by an increase in resources. It would be helpful if the Minister would give us a clearer picture of the Government's views of the cost-effectiveness or otherwise of employing additional staff. How many cases are currently being abandoned because of staff shortages?

Is the Minister prepared to say that Government restraints on Civil Service manpower do not play a significant part in the adequacy of tax collection?

Earlier this week, I was interested to see the Solicitor-General's response to the Adjournment debate relating to the Land Registry. He talked about a possible new way of looking at the manpower requirements of a body such as the Land Registry, which is self-financing and which might be considered outside the normal Civil Service restraints. Will the Minister examine that point, which is reported in *Hansard* of 30 November 1987, in the light of the staffing claims that have been made by the driver vehicle licensing centre?

I am happy with the improved links with the police. In May 1984, the police in my area of south Wales were unwilling to participate in the vehicle excise duty blitz operation that was called for. As the Minister knows, this autumn there has been a blitz campaign. It will be helpful if, in an appropriate way, the Minister will tell the House what the results of that campaign have been, and whether, in the Department's view, the operation has been cost-effective. I do not know what the appropriate form is, but I am sure that the Minister, with his usual courtesy, will find a means of stating the position to the House.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): If the hon. Gentleman will put down a question, I will be able to answer him.

Mr. Anderson: With regard to the level of finance, this is where we came in. Each time, I have received a sheaf of replies from the Department of Transport stating that it is concerned about the level of fines and that it is derisory that only £47 is the average fine for those in default. As the Chairman of the Committee said, on balance, it almost makes it worthwhile or not to pay one's vehicle excise duty. Perhaps that is a message that should not go out too clearly from the debate. The Chairman talked about widespread evasion and little risk.

Therefore, it would be helpful to know whether the Government will seek to lean on the Magistrates Association and the extent to which the Magistrates Association has responded in sending guidance to magistrates on the appropriate fines for vehicle excise offences. Clearly, the current campaigns have been ineffective. The level of fines has moved up only marginally. It is still wholly inadequate and is no real deterrent to those who are tempted to default on payment of vehicle excise duties.

Finally, I have been in touch with the Department from time to time to ask what other bright ideas it has about evasion. Two years ago, I raised, if only for consideration, the question of wheel clamps and received a reply from a gentleman who then described himself as the Minister for Aviation, the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). In a letter dated 29 November 1985 he referred to the point that I raised during the debate on 24 October 1985, stating that I suggested

"that the wheel clamping of an unlicensed vehicle might be a possible enforcement measure in areas of high evasion."

The Minister stated:

"At present, wheel clamping is, of course, being trialled"—

that is an awful word—

"in a small area of central London to test its effectiveness in the field of parking control. I think we need to complete that experiment and, if successful, establish clamping as an accepted traffic control measure before considering its use for other purposes. But I have certainly not ruled out the possible use of clamping, or impounding, to strengthen VED enforcement in urban areas in the long term."

That letter was written just over two years ago. I repeat my suggestion to the Minister, but ask, how long is "the long term"?

7.11 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) not only because of the importance of his contribution but because he addressed a matter to which I shall turn in a moment, not the question of vehicle excise duty but the interface between policy and the work of the Public Accounts Committee, which is an extremely important issue.

First, I should like to put to the House, as I did to some extent during last year's debate, my question, "Why do we bother?" Why do some of us turn up every Monday afternoon from 4.45 pm until about 7 o'clock and every Wednesday afternoon from 4.15 pm to 7 o'clock, with mounds of paper, to take part in the operation of the PAC? For sure, it is not for publicity. We do not get our names in the papers as a result. One gets more publicity from one asinine remark to the Press Association about nothing at all than one gets for serving on the PAC for a year. For sure, it is not to address packed Benches in the House of Commons. As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) rightly said, if the House was concerned about that matter and was not prepared to trust to our judgment, hon. Members would be here to listen, but they are not. Perhaps we should regard that as a negative compliment.

Why do we do it? I know why I do it. In many ways, it is the most important thing that I do in this building, apart from, of course, my constituency work because, at last, I, a little cog in this big wheel, can get to grips with the real source of power. I am sorry to say that the real source of power is not my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, fond though I am of him because we were at Cambridge together, and I have the highest possible admiration for him. The real source of power sits opposite us in the PAC on Mondays and Wednesdays — the "Sir Humphrey Appleby", the permanent secretary, the great mandarin. The first sign of the crucial importance of the PAC is that the head of the Department is legally, contractually, and statutorily required to be there in front of Committee members.

Only the other day, the Treasury Officer of Accounts, a senior civil servant who appears at all our meetings, circulated another memorandum to all permanent secretaries reminding them of their statutory duty to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to answer for all the work of their Department, including work before they came to the Department. They may have served earlier in a different Department, but they must answer for their Department's work even before they became the permanent secretary.

The memorandum also serves to remind us — my goodness, what an important point this is — that if Ministers decide on policy grounds to overturn the recommendations of their officials in a way that the officials regard as financially unwise or likely to come before the Committee for censure, it is the duty of the permanent secretaries to seek written instructions from their Minister. It is worth stressing that point because it

[Mr. Michael Latham]

is not academic. To my certain knowledge, the Committee has at least twice asked the Officer of Accounts whether such instructions were sought. I hasten to say that we received satisfactory responses on each occasion. The duty of the Officer of Accounts to appear personally before the Committee is a statutory duty that cannot be waived and that is, in my view, absolutely crucial to our work.

The work of the Comptroller and Auditor General is also absolutely crucial. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne rightly paid tribute to the work of Sir Gordon Downey. That tribute is echoed by all who serve on the Committee and hon. Members throughout the House. I intervened in the right hon. Gentleman's speech to ask him to draw, which he duly did, a distinction between the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the reports of our Committee. It should be placed firmly on the record that the reports of the National Audit Office are exactly that — reports made by the National Audit Office to this House. Before they appear, and indeed after they appear, as a member of the Committee I must be satisfied about two things: first, that they are totally scholarly and objective, that the facts are not in dispute but are absolutely accurate and have been agreed by the Department, and that they are brought forward in an effective and incontrovertible manner. Secondly, I want to be sure in my own mind that the subject was worth investigating in the first place, that it is neither too trival nor so diffuse as to be outside our responsibility.

I must sound a word of caution. As our responsibilities widen and as, more and more, we are taking on matters which in the old, pre-value for money days we would not have taken on, we are addressing issues that are wide, difficult and arguably within the role of other Select Committees. I refer, for example, to agricultural stock holding, to the common agricultural policy and to other matters which we have addressed and which I and, I believe, other members of the Committee had question marks in our minds about whether we should have tackled those issues at all or whether they would not have been better dealt with by a Select Committee because — I return to the point made by the hon. Member for Swansea, East—they involve mainly policy. The hon. Member for Swansea, East referred, absolutely rightly, to the report on vehicle excise duty and properly put forward the point of view of his constituents.

I should like to say two things about this matter. First, the Committee did not recommend, indeed, as far as I know, the Committee has never intended to recommend, a particular option, such as rural petrol proposals. Secondly, in so acting, the Committee acted as a committee of politicians seeking consensus and a unanimous report. It may well be that the National Audit Office would have liked us to recommend a particular course of action. I do not know whether it did. I am not going to say what went on in the Committee because it would be wrong to do so. However, I remind the House that the report that appeared was the report of the Committee and not of the National Audit Office. It is important to draw a clear distinction between the two.

When sitting in Committee I often think how I would react if I were sitting at the table as the Officer of Accounts and the way in which I should attempt to answer some of the questions put to me. I often think how nice it would be to have a witnesses' guide which, as permanent secretary, I could have beside me, as well as the pages and pages of briefing that are brought to our deliberations. What would I ask myself? First, I should say, "Take it seriously, do your homework thoroughly, assume that the Committee has actually read the documents, that hon. Members will know which questions to ask, and that they will not ask them in a partisan manner but will respond effectively and reasonably to decisive and clear answers."

Above all, apart from not acting in a cocksure or dismissive way — I hope that no permanent secretary would do that—if a mistake has been made, let him say so, clearly and simply. Let me just give one simple example where exactly that happened and where the admission was made. It comes from the report on service movements, and relates to the deplorable little incident of the wasted money on the purchase and sale of the MV Keren which is reported there but with which I will not weary the House.

I asked Sir Clive Whitmore, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Ministry of Defence—a very high mandarin indeed:

"Would you say on reflection that this had been a well-handled event?"

Sir Clive Whitmore replied:

"I do not think that it was a well-handled event."

Fair enough, absolutely right and he admitted it.

The next question is what one is to do about it and if one will be able to come back in a year's time, not on the incident that I have mentioned—that is finished—but on similar incidents, such as that of the Property Services Agency to which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred, and hear an official of a Department say that he has accepted the Committee's criticisms and recommendations and has taken action designed to put things right. After all, there have been occasions when the Committee has concluded a report by saying that it is not satisfied with a particular matter and will expect to see a considerable improvement in performance in 12 months' time.

It is well understood, both in the House and outside, that there are expectations of that kind on the part of the House and the Committee in which the House places its trust — an offer that the Committee cannot refuse. We look for those expectations to be met effectively and, if they are not, we will go back and back until the thing is put right, and, if necessary, heads will roll.

On the subject of heads rolling — and I made this point strongly to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary last year—we do not expect to have to come back year after year and discuss the same subjects. We expect our recommendations to be met by the Treasury minutes and action to be taken. When we find ourselves returning to the same subject, we must ask what has gone wrong with the Department, why the accounting officers have not done what they said they would do, and why the Minister has not insisted upon it. Ultimately the buck stops with him and his colleagues. Recommendations which are accepted in Treasury minutes are to be implemented, and implemented quickly.

I could give an example, not mentioned in debate so far, of where nonsenses of an almost hilarious kind appear, but which point a lesson and adorn a tale. This is the 17th report, dealing with the Northern Ireland appropriation accounts. It is difficult to imagine a greater cosmic, mega-yawn than that title, but in this document we find two serious matters. The first is the fact that the Industrial

Development Board for Northern Ireland was examined by this Committee on the way in which it had paid additional money to a company to persuade it to remain in Northern Ireland. Although this might be considered laudable, the officer of the board admitted under questioning that the company was thinking of moving from Northern Ireland, not to Tokyo, Bonn, or Los Angeles, but to County Durham, another part of the United Kingdom. The board paid money to keep the company in Northern Ireland, taxpayers' money, although the company wanted to move from one development area to another.

I asked who the company's main rivals were. Were they other United Kingdom companies? Mr. McAllister, the witness, said, "They would be." So the main rivals of this company to which taxpayers' money was being paid were other United Kingdom companies, who saw one of their rivals being subsidised to remain in the same place rather than move to a different part of the United Kingdom. I asked if this was a matter on which the IDB had any concern:

"Is there not a risk that you will simply pay money to efficient, well-managed, profitable companies—in the words of paragraph 111—moneys which are paid for obviously by all United Kingdom taxpayers to the detriment of other United Kingdom companies?"

To this Mr. McAllister replied,

"We have three criteria to apply which are: viability, efficiency and additionality".

We have only recently had the equivalent of a Treasury minute, the report of the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel, and the matter is dealt with very briefly indeed. The report said that the Departments

"have noted and will have in mind in case work the Committee's expectation that IDB's selective financial assistance criteria should be applied with due regard to the national, as well as the Northern Ireland regional, industrial development interest".

I shall want a lot more than "noting". When we come back to the House in 12 months' time with this, as we may well do, I shall want to be sure that we are not still dishing out taxpayers' money to keep one company competing with other companies in one area of the United Kingdom when it might have wanted to move to another.

I hope, too, that very close examination will be made of the farcical situation in the same report of the people in Northern Ireland who got compensation because they fell over the kerb stones. One of the most serious and unsatisfactory answers that I read—and heavens knows we hear and read some bad ones—was the response given to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

"Have you any system to eliminate the possibility of collusion between any of your staff and claimants?"

was the question, and the witness replied:

"I arranged for an immediate basic systems examination from this aspect of our 6 geographic Roads Divisions, with the outcome that it is now apparent to me that in 3 of those Divisions the system falls short of what I could, as Accounting Officer, accept as fully meeting the required criterion."

There is no suggestion here that there was collusion, nor does the Committee suggest it, but the fact is that there were not adequate systems in place to prevent collusion between staff and somebody pretending that he had fallen over a stone and getting taxpayers' money for doing so.

That is the sort of tiny matter which the Public Accounts Committee drags up, tiny compared with mighty matters like De Lorean, with which we also deal. I know that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary takes these things seriously and has said so many times but I ask him to let it not be doubted that there could be no more crucial role for Back Benchers than this, to prevent the waste of their constituents' money.

7.27 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this debate as I have a particular interest as transport spokesman on the Liberal Bench. I am interested in two of the five reports. I was slightly taken aback when the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) came in beside me with a whole stack of reports under his arm. Perhaps it is because I am new to the House that I was not aware that I probably should have read the whole lot and that they could be discussed tonight. So I will stick to transport and one other subject.

The first report is on the evasion and enforcement of vehicle excise duty. I was astonished to learn that 2·2 million owners evade duty at some time during the year, and I welcome the Department of Transport's assurance, which I think it gave the Committee, that it regarded evasion of £100 million a year as being too high. That is quite an understatement: I think that it is astronomically high. It is not only a serious loss of revenue. Untaxed vehicles are also frequently unroadworthy and often do not have Ministry of Transport test certificates, and drivers too are often uninsured. That raises important safety considerations.

It appeared from the report that the Department of Transport has reached something of a crossroads on the question of evasion. I believe that it was Sir Alan Bailey who pointed out that there is a limit to how much of the £99 million the Department can get back before it must spend more on enforcement than is received in revenue. I understood that, on the Department's admission, the vehicle excise duty compared unfavourably with a number of other taxes and duties that cost less in proportion to the total yield from that excise duty.

I believe that the most disappointing aspect of the report—it has been echoed by the PAC—is that there is no definitive answer on how to solve the problem posed by the vehicle licence. It seems that either more staff must be employed—the process would then rapidly become non-cost-effective—or people should go round clamping vehicles that appear to be unlicensed to establish ownership and licence status. I believe that that was what the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson)—he has since left the Chamber—was advocating. I am not especially keen on the idea as I believe that then our roads would be cluttered with clamped vehicles.

In paragraph 15 of the report, the Committee stated that it was not provided with any information about

"calculations or considerations on which all of the possible alternatives to VED have again been rejected".

An idea has been floating for a while to abolish the vehicle excise duty in favour of an increased petrol tax. That would transfer cost to the use of a car rather than ownership. To a certain extent, it would contribute to fuel conservation. There is no doubt that the £100 car licence is a considerable disincentive to many people who wish to own a car, especially in areas where the public transport service is poor. The abolition of the vehicle licence would be welcomed by those living on small islands, especially by my constituents of Argyll and Bute and those of my hon.

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). There is very little in the way of roads on those islands.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): They are small islands.

Mrs. Michie: Yes, indeed. Often one can travel from one end of an island to the other fairly speedily in a car.

I understand that, in 1979, Stephen Potter of the Open University carried out research on petrol tax. He said that on average, if an increased petrol tax was imposed, 50 per cent. of people would be worse off, but he also showed that rural motorists—contrary to their belief—did not incur a higher than average mileage. I find that hard to believe. However, Mr. Potter said that higher income leads to higher mileage.

I hasten to add that the idea of putting a tax on petrol carries all sorts of problems and dangers. My constituency is a large rural area of 3,000 sq miles and it has a coastline longer than that of France. Naturally, I would be extremely worried about the effects of an increase in the duty placed on petrol. Of course, the further north one goes, the higher the price of petrol and I accept that there are tremendous variations throughout the country, but, nevertheless, the knock-on effect of an increase in duty in rural areas would be considerable given that transport and living costs are already extremely high. I understand from the report that the decision on alternatives to the excise duty has not been permanently settled and I look forward to hearing about new ideas. We should always be prepared to consider such ideas.

I am also interested in the 19th report entitled "Expenditure on Motorways and Trunk Roads". I welcome the fact that the PAC recognises that there is a fundamental disagreement between the Department of Transport and the local authorities on their respective responsibilities. The Committee said that there was a need for change.

I agree with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities that there are important practical, financial and manpower advantages to be gained from transferring the responsibility for trunk roads to local authorities—for trunk roads, I hasten to add, not motorways. I understand that in some English counties one road may pass through several counties before joining another. However, it would make sense to transfer the responsibility to local authorities because, as the Committee noted, bypasses and relief road schemes form the greater proportion of the overall road programme. In my estimation, local authorities are better placed to judge, understand and be sensitive to local needs. Such a move would result in the devolution of power, and that has always been advocated by myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): My hon. Friend is dealing with the important matter of public expenditure. What does she think about the directive from the Scottish Office that was sent to the Orkney Islands council? It stated that the 60 mph warning signs that had been put on the roads without Scottish Office approval should be taken down pending consideration by the Scottish Office and, if approved, to be re-erected. Does my hon. Friend think that that directive will result in the good use of public money?

Mrs. Michie: I agree that it does not sound very helpful. Perhaps that matter should be referred to the PAC.

If responsibility for trunk roads was transferred to local authorities, the Department of Transport would look less like a department for roads. I hope that the Minister can reassure us that that large Department has given appropriate consideration to the views of local authorities. Meanwhile, I believe that the Department should rank schemes in order of priority on a financial basis, so that the maintenance of roads—the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has already said that such maintenance has been starved of funds for many years—can occur at the right time and in the right place. Surely that would save money in the long run.

I wish to spend some time commenting on another report that has nothing to do with transport, the 44th report on preventive medicine, in which I am interested as a former employee of the NHS. I welcome the report and I agree with its recommendation that there should be encouragement for an increase in immunisation, which is so important for our youngsters. I am sure that the Committee was wise to deplore the delays in introducing a comprehensive arrangement for an effective screening against cervical cancer. Each year many women die of that disease, and it is essential to set up a proper recall system, well-woman clinics——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): We have had that system for 20 years and it is still not working properly.

Mrs. Michie: I believe that it does.

Debating the report on preventive medicine is timely, and must be somewhat awkward for the Government, who have just announced that patients—with the exception of some categories—will no longer receive a free NHS sight test. One of the report's conclusions refers to the major importance of achieving improvements in the health of the nation through preventive rather than curative medicine. I find it difficult to understand why the Government have chosen to do what they have done with sight testing just at a time when requests were being made to have the three tests that are necessary for the detection of glaucoma routinely carried out in all people over the age of 40. No symptoms help to detect the desease in its early stages, and it is estimated that 150,000 people have undetected glaucoma in this country. The disease is insidious and leads eventually to blindness. How many more people will get it now?

The Government should look again at what I believe to be a retrograde step and accept the recommendations of the report. They should seek information on the costs and benefits of a preventive programme for the detection of glaucoma before introducing — or even if they introduce — the charges. Then perhaps the Public Accounts Committee could examine the matter and see whether such a programme would be cost-effective.

I commend the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, and all the Committee's members for producing as a result of a tremendous amount of work these interesting and worthwhile reports.

7.41 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that, of all the work

one does in the House, the work of the Public Accounts Committee—I have served on it for nearly 10 years—is by far the most satisfying, apart from that for one's constituents. My hon. Friend touched on one or two general points about the Committee's work which I want to develop before I dig into one or two of the reports. Before I do that, I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary for the fact that I shall not stick to the best five reports that have been selected, because I think there are other interesting areas to discuss.

On the general aspect of our work, the time has come — perhaps the opportunity arises now with the impending appointment of a new Comptroller and Auditor General — to examine the way in which we handle the work before us. I am conscious of the increased workload and I am not whingeing about it. However, I am concerned that we should spend our time on the Committee on the real issues of bad management and examining things that have gone badly wrong. I do not want to spend a Monday or a Wednesday evening covering ground that is fairly amorphous, when there does not seem to be any particular point at issue and, in effect, we are following up a report that the Comptroller and Auditor General felt should be of interest to Parliament. Undoubtedly, they are all subjects of interest on various aspects of life in Parliament. However, as my hon. Friend said, the review of agricultural policy was one topic about which I complained vociferously, because it did not seem to me an appropriate subject for the Public Accounts Committee; and I add to that the recent work on a report produced on the TSB, which I thought was wholly out of court.

For the benefit of the incoming Comptroller and Auditor General, I say that the Committee has been very patient about one or two of the offerings it has received. When the new Comptroller takes office, I shall be a good deal less patient if we find his Department investigating areas that may just possibly fall within the provinces that Parliament has given him but which are not of much interest to hon. Members.

The Committee will also look in depth at the quality of some of the work done on areas that are relevant. I declare an interest as an owner of some small woodlands before saying that when we examined the forestry report and the economic analysis done by some organisation, it was not surprising that there was a major reaction from all the forestry interests — public and private — because the quality of the work was well below what we expected from that office.

My hon. Friends were right to raise the problem of the green reports versus the blue reports. The Comptroller and Auditor General produces his report on an issue which receives press coverage — sometimes of considerable length. Some weeks—perhaps some months—later, the Committee examines the report and may well disagree with it entirely, coming up with wholly different recommendations. The coverage that those recommendations receive is conspicuous by its absence and the public is misled into believing that Parliament has agreed with the Comptroller and Auditor General. That is a serious matter which we need to examine closely as a Committee so as to find an answer to it. After all, it took me five years to persuade my colleagues to put a report's conclusions at the front so that they can be found, rather than hiding them away in the middle. We have now made that major step forward, but there is room for further work.

I note that the amendment to the motion has not been selected today, and I do not necessarily agree with its detail. However, it is unacceptable that 35 reports from 1985-86 and another 19 from 1986-87 should be debated in one sitting. We must find a better way of dealing with these reports, which are important. We need a considered minute from the Treasury. I say to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary that I greatly welcome the improvement in the Treasury minutes that we are now receiving. There was a time, early on in my period on the Committee, when, if one got more than five lines in response from the Treasury, one knew that one had hit a bull's eye. Now, we receive considered responses, which is enormously welcome. I thank my right hon. Friend for doing his bit to ensure that that happens.

The incoming Comptroller and Auditor General would be well advised to remember—as would Departments of State — that another aspect of the Committee has changed. We now follow up reports and have an automatic checking system, operating on a two-year cycle, to ensure that, if we have given a critical report, the actions that we have recommended have been acted upon—we do not forget.

I want to delve into one or two of the reports. The first that I want to examine is the 39th report of 1985-86, which was on the Rayner scrutiny programmes. It is a short report, but if I was to recommend any report to hon. Members, this would be it. I remember that there was enormous scepticism in the press — Left, Right and middle — about the usefulness of the Rayner scrutiny. There was great scepticism about whether anyone could come in from outside and put forward proposals that would be worth while. Certainly, the impression given by civil servants at the time was that the world of Government was a very different one, and that they were not likely to be taught much by a mere retailer.

It is interesting to note that in the summary of conclusions and recommendations we say that we were satisfied that the arrangements for these reviews had been highly cost-effective and that they were a valuable way of securing a rapid and positive response to problems. We certainly looked at this in great depth. We went on to say that success depended on choosing worthwhile topics, and that the Prime Minister's adviser on efficiency and the efficiency unit had an important role to play.

We note that many Ministers rejected areas for analysis. Perhaps we should have another review of this. We should underline the point in our recommendations that we trust that the Prime Minister's adviser on efficiency will continue to monitor the acceptance or rejection of recommendations, and that he will be prepared to intervene should any be rejected unreasonably.

In the report we say that even a six-month delay in the implementation of the recommendations had cost the public about £300 million. That is a huge sum of money by any yardstick for a relatively short period. We say that we endorse the continuing arrangements for scrutinies and that the success of the scrutinies depends on the backing of the Prime Minister. It is good that the Prime Minister has supported this during the whole of her period in office. One problem is still outstanding and it is not fully addressed in the Treasury minute. It is the problem of overlap between Departments and further work needs to be carried out on that. So much for the Rayner programmes.

[Mr. Michael Morris]

The National Health Service is a fund of information for the Public Accounts Committee. Again I declare an interest, because I am married to a general practitioner. Inevitably, that means that I get very involved in the questioning of the accounting officers who regularly come to the Committee in relation to the National Health Service. We have slightly fewer reports on the National Health Service than we have had on other occasions—perhaps on a smaller scale.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) was quite right in what she said about our report on preventive medicine. There is no doubt in the minds of Committee members that screening for cervical cancer and the immunisation programmes are of great importance. Those of us connected with the National Health Service know the value of that work. We certainly know its benefit in terms of value for money—if one can put it in that way when talking about the lives of children, or for that matter about the life of anyone.

The Treasury minute talks about the planning and review system by regional health authorities following on from the DHSS. It suggests that the priorities for preventive programmes should be laid down by the DHSS. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bring to the attention of the Secretary of State that, while those are good words and that that is what should happen, it is undoubtedly not happening. I shall urge my colleagues on the Committee to have another look at this, because it is not working very well.

There is a rather weak response from the DHSS about cost-benefit analysis. Its response is that cost-benefit analysis would be very useful but that it is not too sure that it could achieve it in preventive medicine. The Department spends millions of pounds through the research councils and should be able to find some yardstick that gives us some response about cost-benefit analysis. I long for the day when we can get the Department responding as it should in that area.

The other report on the National Health Service is about value-for-money developments and energy conservation. We say that there must be continual vigilance to ensure that the cost-benefit savings that are being achieved will continue to be achieved. There is little point in having a cost-benefit saving in year one and then to discover that somebody has forgotten all about it by year three. We emphasise that, if a district health authority decides to cut a service, that should clearly be separate from a cost-improvement programme.

I was reassured by the Treasury minute when I say that the Department is vigilant to check that claimed cost improvements are just that, and are not a cut in service. The report speaks about the need for further Rayner-type scrutinies in the National Health Service. Of all our services, the Health Service remains one of the most fertile grounds for Rayner-type inquiries.

There are two reports about exporting. Many years ago I wrote a pamphlet for the Bow Group about helping the exporter, and I have kept a keen interest in exporting. The 28th report from the 1985-86 session is called "Export Credits Guarantee Department" and the 18th report from the 1986-87 Session is called "Government Services to Exporters Overseas". On a number of occasions we have questioned the accounting officer at some length and have discussed the problems of the ECGD.

We have recognised that past decisions of the ECGD have resulted in a huge potential cost to the public sector. We must recognise that that cost probably still has to come home to roost. I do not pretend that anything can be done about that, but I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the future marketing strategy of the ECGD is crucial in order to ensure that we do not run up losses on the scale that we have had in the past. It is also crucial in the sense that it still provides a vital service for many of the nation's exporters.

The service is important to the part of the world that you and I, Madam Deputy Speaker, know well, south-east Asia, where ECGD cover is often a key factor for exporters. It would be entirely wrong if, because of earlier decisions about certain other large trading areas, exporters to south-east Asia were to be penalised. The House still awaits a clear statement from the ECGD about its exact marketing strategy for the future. It needs a strategy as opposed to a hand-to-mouth attempt to reduce the cost damage to the public sector borrowing requirement.

The Treasury response to the report "Government Services to Exporters Overseas" is probably the worst Treasury minute that we have before us. It is critical of the Public Accounts Committee. I do not know whether the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), keen and diligent as he is, has read every paragraph of the reports. When I read again paragraph 72 of the Treasury minute on the 18th report, I thought it worth quoting:

> "However, the Report does not give full weight to the range and extent of further improvements already made or under way, nor does it take full account of oral evidence given to the Committee. The FCO and DTI have been conducting for some time a series of major studies of individual components of the export promotion effort."

The next paragraph says:

> "The studies include market research on exporters' requirements; on their perceptions of the official services and how they relate to exporters' needs; and consideration of the adequacy and allocation of resources".

That is a cheeky answer to a serious report. The Public Account Committee questioned diligently the accounting officer. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will read our report again. We said strongly that we were not convinced that the right balance had been achieved or that we knew where we were going in export promotion. If the only thing that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can come up with is a little market research, that is not an adequate response to a serious report.

The Ministry of Defence joins the NHS as one of our most popular candidates for inquiry. The 21st report, 1985-86, deals with the dockyards, a subject which brings a sigh of disbelief from all hon. Members. If a naval ship is to be repaired late and over budget, it should go into the dockyards. I think there was a recognition in all parts of the House that something had to be done to improve the efficiency of the dockyards. It was not for the PAC to comment on policy. We made the important distinction in our report that the Government's proposals for the dockyards were not privatisation but the infusion of commercial management. We highlighted that important difference.

Two other aspects that we pulled out as being of concern for the future of the commercial management are still under question. The House does not yet know whether the targets set for the interim management measures before the commercial managers took over were achieved.

One suspects that they probably were not. In our report we also highlighted the extraordinary establishment of the directorate general of ship refitting. That body was to continue to monitor the work being done on naval ships. We are all for monitoring, but when we were told in the Committee that the monitoring would require a budget of £11 million and no fewer than 800 bodies, we were right to question whether it was needed. I suspect that the Committee will want to have another go at that. For the life of me I cannot think what 800 people will be doing in monitoring work which we all hoped would be done more efficiently than in the past.

The nationalised industries are a pet hobby of mine. A disappointing feature of the National Audit Act 1983, in whose passage I was happy to play a role, was that we had to give way to pressure from the chairmen of nationalised industries to exclude them from the Act. We had to give way on that to get the rest of the meal. We got the rest of the meal but the exclusion of the nationalised industries was wrong in principle and the House will have to come back to it. The 36th report that we produced was encouraging in that we found that at last Departments of State were beginning to learn what the nationalised industries were doing.

The very success of privatisation, whether it is liked or not by the Opposition, means that the number of nationalised industries available for scrutiny is greatly reduced. When the privatisation programme has gone a long way down its course—we hope that it will go a very long way—the House should have another go at ensuring that those industries which remain in the public sector come into the orbit of the Public Accounts Committee.

The Committee has studied vehicle excise duty evasion and enforcement several times. We recognise that we have not yet had great success in catching those who avoid paying the tax. Like other hon. Members, I suspect, I get letters about the dog licence. It is difficult to imagine having a mileage tax on dog movements as an alternative to the dog licence. Motor vehicles are supposed to display a licence, and the licences are supposed to be checked. But even when offenders are caught, we do not succeed in getting the tax. My position is clear. If we have so much trouble collecting the vehicle excise licence duty, how can we collect dog licences? The Government are right to drop dog licences.

8.7 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I wish to follow the references of the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) to the dockyards. It gives me the opportunity to set out a dilemma for some Labour Members of the Public Accounts Committee.

I listened with great care to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Committee, when he referred to our objectives in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Those words were put very well by the Comptroller and Auditor General during our proceedings last week when he referred to the fact that we never challenged policy. Although we never challenge policy, it is often difficult to assess matters objectively when at some stage outside the Committee one has to consider the social implications of a report or of a line of questioning in the Committee.

It was brought home to me most effectively when I went to Devonport following the questioning during the Public Accounts Committee's examination of that subject. While I was in Devonport, I sat in my hotel one night thinking about it. It struck me that the word "effectiveness" has all sorts of implications. It means many different things to many people. If we widen the arguments about effectiveness, to some extent we undermine that objective of public accounting in terms of being objective about the careful, efficient, effective and economic use of public resources. I draw attention to that because it has caused a dilemma in a number of reports, including the report on cost improvement programmes in the National Health Service. While we annually examine supply estimates and follow public moneys in the Public Accounts Committee, security service expenditure has never been questioned or examined by any House of Commons Committee.

I have seen with regret a report that an injunction has been taken out against a Radio 4 programme which examines whether there should be accountability to Parliament for security services expenditure and whether it could be introduced without undermining the security services. I do not intend to press that. Suffice it to say that I regret that the injunction has been taken out, because many people who made reasonable and sensible contributions based on the most objective assessments of the matter will now not be heard on that very wide-ranging programme.

I want to deal with one or two reports in a wider context. Cost improvement programmes are set out in the 47th report, entitled "Value for Money Developments in the National Health Service". In paragraph 6 we say:

> "We noted that in 1981-82 DHSS called for concerted action at local level to achieve better VFM by setting annual target savings intended to increase efficiency. However, since the cash savings achieved were not necessarily a true indication of increased efficiency, from 1984-85 DHSS replaced these efficiency savings by CIPs. The purpose of the latter was to identify measures 'aimed at releasing cash or manpower used in providing a service by getting the same service output for a smaller input of resources'."

We went on to say:

> "In short authorities were required to carry through programmes aimed at making services more efficient and effective thus releasing resources for improvements and new developments. But services were not to be cut."

In paragraph 9 we said:

> "Since it is clearly of crucial importance to ensure that cuts in services are not passed off as genuine cost improvements . . ."

We went on to ask DHSS some more questions. I refer to what constitutes a cost improvement programme and whether it is fair to call it a cost improvement programme, despite the evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee by civil servants who invariably maintain that cuts are not taking place in the National Health Service. The cost improvement programme work set by district health authorities for district hospitals has led to many reports by various organisations. I refer to the report of the Health Service managers to the Mersey region of the Institute of Health Service Management, which refers to a number of what can only be described as cuts.

If in pursuit of the efficient use of resources, pressing the principle of cost improvement programmes, all we get are the cuts outlined in the report, the cost improvement programmes are failing. The report quotes some examples in the Mersey health region:

> "Withdrawal of night/weekend clerical cover in Accident Department; reduction in cooked meals to one per day; use

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

of powdered milk for cooking in place of fresh; reduction of night catering service; reduction in range on menu; elimination of cooked meals at weekend and evenings; introduction of nominal charge for in-patient food; review and reduce cleaning frequencies in clinical areas; increased flexibility between domestic staff and nursing auxiliaries."

Many cuts are being passed off as efficiencies brought about by the implemenatation of cost improvement programmes. The report refers to:

"Consideration of 5-day wards for gynae, surgery, ENT, obstetric; review and closure of satellite peripheral OPDs and centralise services; review level of attendances at immunisation and vaccination and other child health clinics; rationalise or reduce services; restriction of prescriptions to one week for patients being discharged; discontinue early discharge packs given to all maternity patients; return to traditional bedpans; withdraw contract shaving services to patients, now done by volunteers; provision by patients of their own talcum powder and dental cleaning materials; encourage maternity patients to provide their own nappies; remove nursing support from doctors undertaking school medicals."

I will not go any further, but there is a whole list of what can only be described as cuts which are being passed off as efficiency savings under the cost improvement programmes of the National Health Service.

It seems to me that the language is all mixed up, and far more effective monitoring should be done by DHSS officials nationally of what is happening on the shop floor of hospitals. Hardly a week goes by when hon. Members do not express concern over reductions of services in their areas. Very often those reductions in services can be traced back to district health authorities and the excuse is the introduction of cost improvement programmes with a view to saving money. I suggest to the Ministers that those areas bear closer examination.

The 19th report on "Expenditure on Motorways and Trunk Roads" and the report on "Vehicle Excise Duty Evasion and Enforcement" relate to the failures of the Department on the one hand to gather revenue due to it and on the other hand to use revenue available to it for improving roads. In paragraph 19 of the report on roads and motorways we say:

"While expenditure on maintenance might therefore have been expected to take a larger share of the programme, it had in practice remained fairly constant at around 25 per cent. of total expenditure."

We were worried that repairs were not being carried out, as the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) pointed out, which was causing arrears in road improvements, and that this was false economy because at the end of the day it would probably lead to increased expenditure. In paragraph 20 we said:

"To achieve value for money in road maintenance it is important to resurface at the optimum time, to prevent undue deterioration leading to premature reconstruction. . . . A continuing failure to 'spend now and save later' would incur substantial additional real costs and there would be continued disruption, inconvenience and associated costs for industry and the travelling public. . . . We consider it most unsatisfactory that maintenance of roads has been starved of funds for many years . . . and we note DTp's assurance that they will be able to clear the backlog on motorways within six years. But we remain concerned that they are less certain about the extent of the backlog on trunk roads, and the prospect for clearing it up."

My view is that, despite the assurances, the backlog will become greater, in particular on trunk roads. Certain areas such as my constituency and vast parts of Scotland are covered not by motorways but by trunk roads. Such areas are reliant on a road network which, according to our report, may well further deteriorate as resources go elsewhere in the transport budget. As the figure of 25 per cent. remains fairly constant, how shall we get over that?

Let me make a prediction. The Department of Transport is involved in assessing the possibility of introducing tolls on roads. What alerted me to that was a conversation that I had with an official some three months ago. That led to me raising some questions with a Department of Transport official during the course of our proceedings last week when we were examining the burden of lorries on roads. He would not answer my questions. He would not be drawn on whether work was being done in the Department of Transport on tolls for roads or motorways in the United Kingdom. It is likely that within one or two years there will be a statement in Parliament on the introduction of some form of toll system on our motorways. It may not be too long before a person coming off the motorway at the Scratchwood service station is confronted by some sort of European style toll station to collect his pounds as he sets off on the motorway to Birmingham.

Unless the Government build support resources into their expenditure plans at this stage to deal with the backlog, particularly in trunk roads, they will be faced with the need to take a panic decision at some stage in the near future. That panic decision will be the implementation of work that is now being done in the Department on tolls on Britain's roads.

I want to deal briefly with what is happening in our prisons and with what I regard as a false economy. I do not want to deal with work done by prisoners or other matters that have already been raised; I am referring to conditions in prisons, and how bad conditions in prison have the effect of alienating people so that they are not properly rehabilitated. The persistent alienation of people in Britain's prisons has adverse implications for society when they are released. That is particularly true for public expenditure because crime costs money and has implications for policing.

Such matters may appear remote, but if Britain is to have a proper prison service its objective must be the real rehabilitation of people and that costs money. Someone somewhere must work out the relationship between the benefit that derives from an efficient and properly managed and funded prison service with the objective of rehabilitation and the cost and crime implications if no action is taken.

I brought out one simple statistic during the course of my questioning which was the subject of a further memorandum to the Department. We were talking about what we call slopping out in Britain's prisons. We were told that there were 41,200 certified places in British prisons today, of which approximately 22,000 have neither integral sanitation nor some means of access to sanitation. Because of the overcrowding of the cells, the average number of sloppings out in 1985 was about 26,000, out of an average total prison population of 46,200.

We then went on to talk about the modernisation programme and it was said that

"On the basis of the building schemes at present in progress or planned, there will be just under 20,000 places in 1991 still lacking access to sanitation"—

that is nearly half.

"By 1999"—

in 12 years' time—

"that number will have fallen to about 15,600".

That means that by 1999, the end of the century, one third of Britain's prisons population will still be slopping out.

This might appear an ugly subject to raise during our debate, but it is a sign of the problems in our prisons. If as part of their so-called rehabilitation prisoners will still have to slop out in 12 years' time, the economies are false. We are not pursuing a realistic policy of rehabilitation that has future public expenditure implications for the Government, and, in particular, for their law and order policies.

Finally, I want to raise what I regard as a cause celebre on which I spent a lot of my time some 15 months ago. Indeed, over the past year a number of new cases have been brought to me. I am talking about whistle blowers and their role in identifying those defence contractors who are cheating the taxpayer by overcharging for their services where people—as in the case of Mr. Jim Smith, to which I am about to refer—lose their livelihood and in effect ruin their lives because they have stood up for a principle.

It is now several years since I raised the question of Mr. Jim Smith, a former employee of Aish and Company of Poole, major defence contractors at that stage employing some 2,000 people and a subsidiary of the Horstmann group. Mr. Smith alleges that he told Ministry of Defence officials in 1981 that his company was overcharging the Ministry of Defence. He has spent every year since 1981 —I have spoken to him again today—trying to prove that his whistle blowing led to a saving to the taxpayer of over £1 million, £400,000 of which was repaid by that company.

The whole saga of the Smith affair is one of delay, denial and the direct misleading of Parliament by civil servants. I am talking not about officials who gave evidence to our Committee but about officials who made reports to their senior civil servants in the Ministry of Defence. There are four and they were identified by me during the proceedings of the PAC when I raised this matter with Mr. Haig, a civil servant whom I was questioning.

In evidence submitted to us, the MOD maintained that it first became aware of the extent of the profits earned by the firm as the result of a meeting with the company, held at its instigation in March 1982. Mr. Smith denies that. He maintains that he informed the Department.

The whole case seems to turn on the simple question whether Mr. Smith communicated to the MOD in that period following his dismissal information which would enable the MOD to establish whether excess profits had been made. It is my view that he did and that Mr. F. C. Brady, the principal director of MOD accountancy services, Mr. Alf Blyth, the former head of MOD contracts policy branch, Mr. Harry Turner, the former assistant director of MOD accountancy, Mr. Frank McGrath, a senior member of the MOD cost department, Mr. D. B. Cox, the director of contracts at the MOD and Mr. A. J. Figes, principal director of navy contracts, and Mr. George Haldane, the MOD accountant at Aish, all know the truth. They all know what happened.

Mr. Smith supplied to me at my request a sworn affidavit setting out his case and I presented it to the PAC, which then asked that those particular civil servants should be asked what happened. It was interesting to note the evasive way in which they replied and, if they were not evasive, the way in which they set out to deny the truth. I choose my words carefully. Perhaps they thought that their jobs would be on the line, if they were still employed —or their pensions, if they had retired—were they to make open and honest statements. I appeal to them, even at this late stage, to come forward. While they refuse to tell the truth, Mr. Smith does not find work, and he and his family are continually pressed by these matters. Yet they know that he is supported by a series of first-class character references, including one from within the Ministry of Defence.

In my view, the Smith affair has not ended. His example led to further whistle blowers surfacing in the form of Mr. Don Pitman of Thorn EMI and Mr. Burgess-Cooper of Doughty Rotell, who similarly had a squalid deal, although the Public Accounts Committee said in its 25th report that the MOD should give the fullest consideration to such people. In the Treasury minutes in reply, the MOD said it would always be prepared carefully to consider any information furnished on such matters, and the circumstances in which such information was furnished. Yet, in the case of Mr. Burgess-Cooper, a substantial repayment—in the sum of £400,000, I am told—was made to the MOD. Mr. Burgess-Cooper is unemployed and cannot find work.

What will happen to such people? Are they to remain unemployed for the rest of their lives? Are they never to be compensated? We now have the case of Marconi. We have two whistle blowers in this instance. Some hon. Members may know who they are; certainly the MOD knows. I believe that the information provided by whistle blowers in the case of Marconi may well save the country not millions, not tens of millions, but hundreds of millions of pounds. Those are substantial amounts, and I believe that, when people are willing to surface in this way—to prejudice their lifestyles and the position of their families, and often lose their homes—they deserve very special consideration by the MOD.

I am calling for the implementation of the recommendation in our PAC report, which was approved of in a Treasury minute. Those people are out there setting an example for others. If they are protected, others will come forward in other areas of procurement, be it the National Health Service or defence.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman make clear what he is proposing? Is he proposing that whistle blowers should be paid a bounty —a percentage of what they bring in?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am proposing what is proposed in the PAC report: that when people surface to give information, the position should be carefully considered, and compensation should not be ruled out if a loss of livelihood is involved. I think that that is a very fair proposition.

8.33 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on the work of his Committee. I am not sure whether I should congratulate him or my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on having chosen tonight for the debate. I was told by the staff in the Vote Office that the cost of each set of papers needed for the debate was some £380. By choosing a night when there are not so many hon. Members in the House, my right hon. Friend must already have contributed a fair amount of savings to the public purse.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I enjoyed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), who pointed out that, when things go wrong, heads may well have to roll. I am sure that all hon. Members will wish to commend the work of the outgoing Comptroller and Auditor General, who is in a privileged position. His head does not roll, or at any rate does not roll easily, as I discovered when I first arrived in the House, and was rather surprised to receive a freely distributed glossy brochure containing a colour photograph of the Comptroller and Auditor General. He described himself in the brochure as the public's watchdog against waste and extravagance. I have not seen a repetition of that coloured brochure, so perhaps my demand for his head on that occasion at least achieved a slight reduction in future costs.

Before I comment on the 44th report, let me briefly mention the 19th. I am not sure whether the Committee is aware that the Department of Transport proposes to alter the role of the professional engineer in determining the cost of contract variations. I feel that the Government should take great care in proposing any changes in the system, which could well cost rather more than they are attempting to achieve in savings. We have already heard about unfortunate episodes of corruption in the Property Services Agency. The less that civil servants have to do with the detailed negotiation of contract variations and with the execution of engineering itself, the better, in my view. I feel that there is much to be gained from sticking with the traditional method of working, as at present.

The 44th report covers preventive medicine. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne spoke of costs of £600 million. The report calls for more cost-benefit analysis, as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris). In their reply, the Government said that it was difficult to make a cost-benefit analysis. However, let me draw the attention of the House to the White Paper promoting better health, which very opportunely came out last week. Paragraph 1.9 lists many of the benefits from previous preventive campaigns. It mentions smallpox, diphtheria and tetanus as former killer diseases which have been virtually eradicated, and states:

"The danger from polio has almost gone and great advances have been made in the fight against tuberculosis . . . perinatal mortality has fallen by 46 per cent. in the last 10 years . . . On dental health . . . nearly half of all children under five years old now have no decay at all."

Perhaps a little analysis could be made of the value of those benefits, as a start in trying to evaluate the cost-benefit analysis of further preventive medicine work. I do not believe that it is as difficult as was made out in the report.

The White Paper goes on to say that a massive amount can still be done to reduce the incidence of disease, and quotes a number of causes of illness:

"a quarter of young people are overweight . . . alcohol is a factor in 1 in 3 of all attendances by men at hospital accident and emergency departments . . . 100,000 deaths each year caused by smoking".

On coronary heart disease——

Mr. Allen: Which PAC report is the hon. Gentleman quoting?

Mr. Thurnham: I have been quoting from the recommendations of the 44th PAC report, which calls for cost-benefit analysis on preventive medicine. The Government's response, both in the original papers with which we have been provided and in the White Paper, draws attention to the benefits that result from greater preventive measures.

Let me refer more briefly to the Government's response concerning deaths from coronary heart disease. We were pleased to have a visit in Bolton from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, although we wondered what headline the paper might use. Perhaps she had the "Look After your Heart" campaign in mind when she was asked whether she had smoked as a schoolgirl, and replied that she had been too busy reading "Lady Chatterley's Lover"—which, of course, provided the headline.

The challenge now facing the Government is to change the emphasis in the National Health Service from illness service to true health service, offering help to prevent disease and disability. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee referred to two aspects of the Committee's report. First, he stressed the importance of the cervical cancer campaign. Secondly, he referred to the need for higher immunisation rates for rubella, measles and whooping cough. Page 14 of the White Paper shows that measles and whooping cough immunisation rates have risen from under 50 per cent. in 1976 to approximately 70 per cent. in 1986.

I ask the Government to give more help to those who suffer after immunisation has gone wrong. Whooping cough immunisation can lead in a small number of cases to severe brain damage. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to a distressing constituency case that relates to the cervical cancer campaign. During the election campaign I met a constituent of mine, Mrs. Sharrock, of Archer Grove in Tonge, who has to care for a daughter very severely affected by brain damage caused by a whooping cough immunisation that went wrong.

I ask the Government to ensure that such people are better provided for. They should be more generous in compensating the victims of such accidents. That would encourage more people to be immunised and would lead to greater benefits for us all. If an accident can be attributed to negligence and it leads to a court case, damages amounting to £500,000 might be awarded. As it is, those who have suffered an accident such as this are obliged to manage on a very small sum of money, although they are coping with severe difficulties and very great burdens.

It is important that more people should be immunised against rubella. A Bill is to be introduced by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). If abortions cannot take place after 18 weeks, many more handicapped children will be born. My research shows that there are up to 3,000 severely handicapped children in residential care. Their natural parents are unable to cope with the severity of their children's handicap. It is nonsense to suggest that parents are queuing up to adopt or to foster such children.

One of the most important tasks for the Government is to make people more aware of the benefits of preventive medicine. Page 26 of the report states that

"Adding fluoride to water supplies is a safe and effective way of reducing dental decay and the need for fillings. The benefits of fluoridation, which extend into adult life, are greatest for children, particularly those in deprived areas".

Much more should be done to promote such benefits.

In areas such as Bolton a minority of people are nervous about the effects of fluoridation. They believe that fluoridation poses unknown or even real hazards, with the result that they campaign against fluoridation. In some parts of the country, people have voted against fluoridation. If the White Paper is right and fluoridation is safe, more should be done to allay their fears.

On 25 November my hon. Friend the Minister for Health said that he would be negotiating with the medical profession for improved services in inner-city areas. He also said that primary health care services in some of our inner city areas are very poor. This is the single most important measure that the Government could introduce to improve health care in such areas. Therefore, I urge the Government to do all that is in their power to promote the advantages of preventive care and to provide additional facilities and assistance to both general practitioners and dental practitioners.

8.43 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I wish to raise a case in my constituency that highlights the 25th report of the Public Accounts Committee on the prison building programme. This case highlights the problems that were referred to in that report. I refer to the strategic planning procedures and the failure of the Home Office and the Property Services Agency over the design and the refurbishment of prisons.

In my constituency there is Medomsley prison. The first week after I became a Member of Parliament in June of this year, I was told that the designation of that prison was to be changed from a detention centre to a category C prison. In October 1987, I was notified that the newly designated prison was to be closed. That prison has now been closed.

When I visited Medomsley prison on 26 June, I saw that a large amount of public money had been spent on bringing it up to date. Work continued after my visit to bring that building up to standard and to ensure that it was fit to be used as a category C prison. However, Medomsley prison has now been closed. The long-term future of that prison has not yet been decided, so work on it has continued. There are rumours — I stress that they are rumours, which I heard only this afternoon, so I have had no opportunity to check them — that the prison was visited yesterday by a Home Office official who gave instructions that no more money was to be spent on the work in hand—a new kitchen block—and that therefore the work should stop. If that is so, the problems that have been highlighted in this report are compounded by the example that I have just given.

We are entitled to inquire, therefore, whether public money has been wasted. According to this report, the Home Office gave evidence that it was on top of its general planning. We must ask whether the Home Office's general planning has been as effective as it led the Public Accounts Committee to think. Furthermore, we are entitled to ask whether there is a strategic plan, which includes Medomsley, or whether the prison service and the Home Office are reacting hurriedly, precisely because the planning has been far from adequate.

I am worried about other matters that affect my constituency. Medomsley prison has had a fair amount of support from people in the locality. It is an area of high unemployment, and jobs are at a premium. I hope, therefore, that my fears are unfounded and that there are long-term plans for that establishment. As a considerable amount of public money has been spent on it during the last few years, I hope that the assurances that were given to the Public Accounts Committee about the prison building programme will be reaffirmed in the case of Medomsley prison.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Several hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. The spokesmen on the Government and Opposition Front Benches would like to reply to the debate at about 9.25. The arithmetic is fairly obvious — approximately 32 minutes.

8.48 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I intend to confine my remarks to the 45th report of the Public Accounts Committee, on the financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan police.

The efficiency of the Metropolitan police has implications for other police forces outside the Metropolitan area. The Home Secretary determines the national limit on police manpower. He also decides whether there is to be an increase in police manpower within the overall national limit. During the last eight years there has been a substantial increase in police manpower, reflecting the high priority that the present Government attach to law and order. Thanks to the restructuring of police pay, police forces are typically close to their approved establishment levels. There is no longer the acute difficulty in recruiting and retraining police officers that was experienced before 1979.

As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said in reply to a question from me earlier today, the Thames Valley force, which is the force of particular concern to me, has enjoyed the largest increase of any force outside London over the past few years. Since its formation in 1968, its manpower has increased by 507, or 17 per cent., but the population that it serves has increased by more than 23 per cent. in the same period. Consequently, the ratio of police to population in the area, starting from a low base, has continued to deteriorate and remains the worst in the country. On any other criterion of measurement, whether it be area to be policed, levels of reported crime, road mileage or accidents reported, the Thames Valley force is substantially under strength.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my hon. Friend agree that we have a peculiar security problem with regard to the number of special people that the force has to protect?

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend makes a powerful point, because not only under normal criteria is the force under strength, but it has additional duties because of royal residences and duties with regard to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

On a mean average of those criteria, the force would need an extra 781 officers to raise its establishment to the average of other provisional forces such as Hampshire, Sussex, Kent or Essex. That is why I strongly urge my right hon. Friend to approve the application for 200 additional officers this year and 700 over a period of four years, which the authority has requested.

The force is in the forefront of civilianisation—trying to release police officers for front-line policing duties by

[Mr. Watts]

substituting civilians. It was my knowledge of the Thames Valley police and the importance of civilianisation in this process that led to my interest in the conclusions of the PAC's report about the process of civilianisation in the Metropolitan police. The report tells us that between 650 and 750 posts fall into the category of jobs occupied by police officers that do not require any police training or powers. The report says that, in addition, the Metropolitan police have identified functions carried out by a further 600 or 700 police officers that appear to be suitable for contracting out or transfer to other agencies. Thus, that substitution of civilians for police officers would enable my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to approve an increase in the establishment of the Thames Valley force, which would bring it up to the average of its peer group.

I am neither so naive nor so parochial as to expect that, even if those 1,400 police officers in the Metropolitan police were released by civilianisation, the extra 700 that we want in the Thames Valley force would automatically be provided. My right hon. Friend will have to consider all demands for increased manpower, including those of the Metropolitan police, and allocate increased establishments in accordance with objective priorities.

Wearing his other hat as the police authority for the Metropolis, my right hon. Friend should be asking himself why so much scope for civilianisation remains within the Metropolitan police. The report tells us that as at 31 December 1984 the approved establishment of the Metropolitan police was a little over 27,000. Of that number we are told that 1,400—nearly one in 20—were engaged on duties that did not require the use of trained police officers; not only that, but at double the cost of employing civilians to do those tasks.

I cannot accept that policing in my constituency and throughout the Thames Valley area is so overstretched, while 1,400 officers in the Metropolitan police are used for duties that could and should be discharged by civilians. Until full advantage is taken of the opportunities for further civilianisation in the Metropolitan police, it would be wrong of my right hon. Friend to approve any further increases in its manpower.

The report shows that since 1983-84 only 372 posts have been civilianised in the Metropolitan police. The target for 1986-87 was for a further 150 posts to be civilianised. At this rate, it will take nearly 10 years to mop up the existing scope for releasing police officers for proper policing duties by taking on civilians in their place.

For those reasons, I fully support the PAC's conclusions. The House is indebted to it for drawing attention to this scandalous misuse of trained police manpower and the deplorably slow progress that is being made in advancing the process of civilianisation.

8.55 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I must confess that I am speaking as a PAC watcher for the past 20 years, reading virtually every one of its reports and following its every development with the closest interest. It is a fascinating subject to study and it is nice to have a sector of research all to oneself.

I recently served on the PAC for a month or so—technically, I am still a member—although other duties forced my resignation. I greatly enjoyed my membership and was very reluctant to leave. I hope that it will not be considered patronising if I say how impressed I was by the high calibre of the membership and interest of the PAC, which must be the best ever.

In the past, the PAC was a backwater, but today it is a major instrument of parliamentary rights. The present PAC is blessed with a Chairman who is not only highly effective but actively involves other members of the Committee. I can remember watching the Committee in the past from the public seats and it was very much a Chairman's Committee; other members hardly got a look in. But today it is a much more actively engaged Committee, and credit for that should go to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon).

I wish to address my remarks to general issues of the conduct of the Committee. They are illuminated by three reports: House of Commons 115, December 1986, "National Audit Office Estimates and Corporate Plan"; House of Commons 98, March 1987, "Financial Reporting to Parliament"; House of Commons 61, April 1987, "The Financial Management Initiative". I select those because they concern the way in which the PAC and the National Audit Office operate and the powers of scrutiny of the PAC with regard to Government.

I came to the conclusion as long ago as 1968, after serving with—no, for—my right hon. Friend on the Fulton committee on the Civil Service, that there was something seriously wrong with public accountability in this country. I concluded that Parliament's machinery—at that time the PAC and the Exchequer and Audit Department—was sadly out of date, was controlled to a wholly unhealthy degree by the Treasury and that no one cared very much about the situation. I will not bore the House with details of the 15-year campaign that followed, which culminated in the National Audit Act 1983, introduced by the former right hon. Member for Chelmsford, Mr. St. John Stevas. The right hon. Gentleman is now a noble Lord, but his title escapes me.

The National Audit Act 1983 received its Third Reading on my final day as a Member of Parliament prior to what I have come to call the wilderness years. It gave the PAC and the National Audit Office independence of the Treasury and all the powers it needed apart from powers to investigate nationalised industries. The opposition to the inclusion of the nationalised industries from some chairmen and trade union leaders was profoundly anti-democratic. No doubt the House will return to that matter.

The PAC is now successfully carrying out its new and enhanced role, as established in the 1983 Act. However, I have a few misgivings about the way in which the state audit system works and some proposals for its development. I will begin with my misgivings.

I have no doubt that the Treasury would like to reclaim its influence over the PAC and the National Audit Office. We must still be vigilant, in view of that threat. I read a Treasury paper only the other day which boasted about the Government's efficiency scrutiny programme and somehow managed to work in a mention of similar work carried out by the PAC. When I read such references, I know that the Treasury tiger is slinking around the perimeter fence and we must be very vigilant. The Treasury would very much like to supervise the National Audit Office closely, especially its staffing, numbers and

grading arrangements. I believe that the Treasury should have no locus in that matter and control should rest with the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee.

I believe that the PAC produces far too many reports. It produced 34 in 1986 and 19 between January and July 1987, the period under consideration. Most of the reports are good, but too many are superficial. We are getting close now to one report per Committee session—50 a year or more. There should be far fewer reports, but the reports should be in greater depth.

No other Select Committee has anything like the work load of the PAC. There is a case for increased personal assistance and research assistants for PAC members who have to examine senior officials and their senior staff who are always specialists in the matter upon which they are being examined. It is true that the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff have served the PAC satisfactorily. However, Committee Members, given the importance of the Committee, which is after all the senior Select Committee of the House, should have personal research assistants to enable them to discharge their duties.

I believe that the PAC and the NAO still concentrate too much on financial control and give too little attention to the effectiveness, result or impact of public spending programmes. The typical PAC report is still about some colossal cost overrun on weapons procurement, building or some other project and not about the social impact of programmes or the results achieved by a given programme. We can all understand why the concentration is on overspending. There is so much of it, the sums involved are so large and the consequences are so obvious. A number of such reports on torpedoes, dockyards and prison buildings have performed a valuable public service.

However, I would like to see much more examination of all those inner-city programmes and the spending programmes from four or five Departments aimed at people living in inner cities to see whether they benefit people living in those areas so we can decide which programmes are more effective than others. That may trespass on the area of the merits of Government policy, but I do not see any harm in that

Moving to more contentious areas, I believe that the NAO should occasionally compare the provision of public services with the need for such services. For example, what is the gap between what can be objectively established as the need for preventive medicine and the present level of provision? What are the service levels for customers in DHSS local offices, and what should they be to meet the needs of the local population?

The Comptroller and Auditor General's evidence in House of Commons 115 states that assistant auditors are recruited direct from university and trained by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. While it is right that a large proportion of NAO staff should have accountancy qualifications, I believe that recruitment should be widened. If the move is towards studies of the effectiveness and result of spending programmes, the NAO should recruit scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and economists. That is the practice in the General Accounting Office in the United States. My experience in not too dissimilar work in management consultancy has shown that the best discipline for investigatory studies is civil engineering. Accountancy in this country at least is far too narrow a discipline to be effectively used exclusively for audit staff.

In spite of my misgivings about the system, I believe that new avenues are opening up all the time for increasing the effectiveness of state auditing. All over the world, state audit bodies are expanding their range of inquiries. We need not go so far as the People's Republic of China which is now training 30,000 new auditors in 43 training centres and a further 20,000 by television, but I have the impression from reading the publications of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions that throughout the world audit is developing into a very important arm of legislature.

Where do we go from here in the British state audit system? The amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) provides us with the opportunity to discuss the way in which the House handles PAC reports. An allocation of three days seems reasonable, given the time that we spend on other matters and the length of the parliamentary recesses. Our suggestion for debates on motions could have risked turning PAC meetings into adversarial combat were it not for the device that we have inserted proposing the prior discussion of motions with the Government. The proposal is very modest, but would add weight and legitimacy to the recommendations of the PAC.

Opportunities for developing the scope of our audit system are provided by the useful report on financial reporting to Parliament. There would be great advantage in combining Supply Estimates with public expenditure programmes—just as other organisations have a one-year budget and a multi-year corporate plan. The Government should produce a standard format for the aims, objectives, performance and outputs for public expenditure programmes. A system of performance indicators is required for every estimate and programme, and it is now technically feasible. Such indicators should be incorporated, as the report suggests, in an annual report for every Department of State.

The report on the financial management initiative could also usefully provide the Public Accounts Committee with a means of examining the performance of Government Departments. The financial management initiative, a concept lifted from the Fulton report, has been grossly over-hyped by the Government. I shall not detain the House with a lengthy description of it, but it is basically a system of management by objectives, combined with a budgetary control system. It divides the Departments into commands, the heads of which have budgets and one day will have objectives and measures of performance.

The PAC rightly commended the system, but it did not say what it would do with the new source of information. In every inquiry from now on, the PAC should demand to see the financial management initiative documents relating to the matters that it is examining, so that it can evaluate what the Civil Service manager was aiming to do, what resources he or she controlled and what, in the Department's eyes, was the performance of the unit under command. In that way, the PAC could examine not only the management of a programme externally but what the Department expected of the programme and its management.

There is one development that the PAC has never touched on. I spoke earlier of the financial management initiative, which is a financial control mechanism. Soon after introducing the FMI, the Management and Personnel Office introduced a personnel work action programme which was intended greatly to advance

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personnel management in Departments by improved training and appraisal arrangements. The PAC should inquire into that.

The PAC always examines financial resources. Why does it not examine human resources and the use that Departments make of people? After all, human resources represent by far the greatest administrative cost. The Civil Service is still very poor at personnel management; it wastes talent and fails to make the best use of its human resources. There is nothing in the PAC's terms of reference to prevent it from examining that crucial aspect. There is great scope for the PAC to examine the use that the Departments make of their people.

All in all, since the 1984 Act the PAC has become a great success. I pay tribute to Sir Gordon Downey's work for it. The PAC could be developed in a number of ways to which I have referred. It must always be pushing forward against the boundaries with which the Treasury would like to circumscribe it. I may say that all the reports of the PAC ultimately indict the Treasury. Cost overruns and financial maladministration are found so often that one is entitled to ask what those at the Treasury who were supposed to be supervising matters were doing. They sit at PAC meetings and keep quiet on such issues.

The PAC is an essential arm of parliamentary accountability, and it has an open road ahead of it. Too often in the past the House has been supine in enforcing its rights. The PAC can be the prime vehicle for asserting parliamentary rights over the Executive.

9.9 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in commending the work of the Public Accounts Committee and especially commend the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who has chaired it with considerable distinction. After all, it is not only the most senior Select Committee but it is our constituents' watch-dog over the Executive and expenditure. One of the most important functions of Committees of the House is to see whether the money is wisely spent. I pay great tribute to the Committee.

I refer briefly to the Committee's report. Perhaps the failure of the roads programme is a little greater than the Committee has said. In two respects, there was a lack of foresight in our roads programme. First, there was a failure to assess the amount of traffic, which has increased in line with the increase in affluence. Secondly, there was a misappraisal of axle weights and their impact on the roads. It is not a matter of three or four highways, but of increased weight, which was particularly caused by our European colleagues. Such factors were never considered in time. They led to the construction of roads without sufficient foundations. We are now seeing the results of cracks in road surfaces.

The Committee did excellent work in respect of preventive medicine. Many previously fatal diseases have now been eliminated. Here I take issue with the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). Glaucoma should be detected by a general practitioner, not necessarily by an optician. That is a small matter of detail.

It is not for me to advise the Committee, but perhaps it should examine the whole structure of the National Health Service. Do we need as many tiers of authority? For example, I refer to regional health authorities. Health services were probably better administered when there were hospital governors and local administrations. There is only one snag, and that is that the expensive items of equipment that are required in modern medicine can more easily be found in large organisations. Of course, it is much easier for civil servants and Ministers to administer a large organisation. Nevertheless, the structure of the NHS needs to be looked at, in particular the number of people who work on the executive side and not on the practical side of it. It will take a number of years; it cannot be done overnight. We should start to look at it now.

On two occasions, my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) drew attention to the police. I shall not enlarge on his remarks, except to say that we need extra manpower. We found that we did not have enough police even to deal with the Hell's Angels problem or the pop festivals.

I now refer to the 50th report dealing with vehicle excise duty. We all walk along streets and see vehicles without licences. What do we do about it? How do we enforce the law? Now that we have centralised computers, it is possible for traffic wardens to see whether a car is licensed. They need not proceed if the licence has been lost or stolen. However, if they find that the vehicle is not licensed, the proper thing is not to wheelclamp the vehicle, because that only serves to block the traffic, but to take it to the pound. If it is then found that the vehicle is not properly licensed, the fine should be increased to £200 or £300. It is no good fining people only £40. They should pay at least £200. Hon. Members of all parties agree that the fines are derisory and should be increased.

The action that would penalise most would be to have the car towed away and for the owner to be unable to redeem it until the fine has been paid. An offender should have to pay the cost incurred in keeping the vehicle while the prosecution procedure takes place. If a person has made a mistake, not having a licence displayed would be an offence, but the fine should not be imposed.

We are losing an enormous amount of revenue by this offence. Furthermore, if one does not have a current licence, insurance is usually involved. Most insurance companies would say that if one does not have a vehicle licence, one cannot be insured. A person who causes an accident and who does not have a licence would not, therefore, be insured, with all the ensuing awful complications.

The penalties for evading vehicle excise licence should be severe, especially now, when the number of road accidents is increasing. The penalty should be made effective and expensive. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been watching the clock closely and, with your leave, will conclude my remarks.

9.16 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I claim the privilege of being the first Back-Bench Member who has been told to hurry up with his speech so that the Front-Bench spokesmen can have sufficient time. I believe that that has never happened previously in PAC debates. Therefore, I am happy to claim that privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I do not recall having given the hon. Gentleman any such advice or instruction.

Mr. Allen: Certainly not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I refer to advice given by friends and colleagues of all parties.

The debate is a reflection of the growing importance that attaches to expenditure and to the scrutiny of expenditure in this House. For far too long that has been a most unglamorous subject, although it has necessitated hard work by the Chairman of the PAC and his colleagues, which has been unsung but essential. I should like to join my hon. Friends in paying tribute to the work done by the PAC, which performs a great service for the House.

Any comments that I make about the need for change or reform excludes the PAC. Indeed, the light that the PAC has shed has helped to show the areas that need further examination. Its example serves to inspire the demand for even greater change and scrutiny in the House. Parliamentary democracy is dependent on control, or at least on scrutiny, of finances. Without that, any attempts at policy control are limited and an apparition or an illusion. Unless there is oversight of money so that policy priorities can be realised and policy decisions implemented, I am afraid that we are chasing a ghost and deceiving ourselves.

It is unfortunate that, perhaps, there is an unwitting conspiracy between hon. Members who do not regard the control and scrutiny of finance as important and who, therefore, are not present tonight in the numbers that we would wish, and the Government — not this Government, but the Executive in general—who would rather not have the irritation or occasional embarrassment of proper scrutiny on behalf of the House. The work that the Public Accounts Committee has done and the extension of that work with the National Audit Office—and again I pay tribute to colleagues on both sides of the House for the work that they have done—can show the way in terms of extended accountability to this House in the future.

I would like to make several points and float some ideas that I hope could be considered at some time by those who sit on the Treasury Bench or on the PAC itself; perhaps the Select Committee on Procedure could make certain proposals on how the House itself could exercise control over the process of financial accountability and scrutiny. I have in mind, first, the areas that are not at present scrutinised by the House and certainly do not come under the watchful eye of the PAC. Hon. Members have referred in some instances to fairly minor areas, such as the security services, and other, rather larger areas such as the nationalised industries, or even the area of Government loans, for example, which escape effective monitoring by the House. We should extend the scope of the monitoring, even though we are constantly engaged in a battle of vigilance to retain the areas that currently come under review.

Then there is the way in which the House itself finds time to debate particular reports, not just those of the PAC but the reports on Estimates which are considered by departmental Select Committees. The departmental Select Committees themselves, on a wider issue, could perhaps bear scrutiny when it comes to debating reports and the use of parliamentary time: 565 reports have been written by departmental Select Committees since 1979 and only six have been brought to this House for debate on substantive motions. Votes have taken place on only four. A great deal of progress could be made there. But debating time has been eroded. The Consolidated Fund Bill is often suggested not as another opportunity for exercising financial accountability and scrutiny but as a debate in which one can raise constituency problems—and there are, sadly, a number of hon. Members who have even abused the good will of the Chair tonight in raising particular, specific constituency issues rather than addressing broader PAC matters which would have been of greater benefit to us all.

I would like to reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) about correlating the various documents put before the House on public expenditure and Estimates. That ties in with the reporting and debating cycle of the House.

There is a great deal more basic organisation that could be done to bring forward decisions in the House, and that is another area where we could look for improvement and change.

I apologise to the hon. Gentleman the Member for Scarborough (Sir Michael Shaw) for having to leave during his contribution, but I understand that he floated the idea of televising the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee. My own view is that, while we should indeed televise the Chamber, far more important is that we televise Select Committees and, even more important, that we start, if that is the option, with the PAC. The Congressional committees have proved the effectiveness of that. While it may not be the sort of popular television that rows during Prime Mininster's Question Time might generate, democracy would be greatly assisted if a Minister or a senior civil servant were questioned by the PAC in some detail. That would benefit both the viewer and the House and enhance hon. Members' views of the role and responsibilities of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Nicholas Brown.

Mr. Allen: I have not finished Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was pausing for breath.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologise. I thought that the hon. Gentleman had concluded.

Mr. Allen: I promise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I will not go on until 10 o'clock.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and myself tabled an amendment — unfortunately it was not called—that recommended that three days should be set aside to debate PAC reports. We do not want a general debate on the PAC reports as we have had tonight. Tonight's debate has reminded me of Desert Island Discs—"Pick your seven favourite reports and at the end, if you are stranded, pick the one that you would most like to read." We would prefer an in-depth debate on specific reports that would require the House to make a decision. A debate upon such reports could be decided upon after negotiation with Government Ministers. The debate could be on a substantive motion, perhaps regarding a major financial scandal, Government abuse or some other pertinent, urgent matter. Such debates should take place in the House within three months of the publication of the PAC reports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South and I also believe that, rather than taking note of a number of reports as we are tonight, we should put before the House a substantive motion requiring a decision. Again, that should not be considered as an attempt to break down the consensus in the PAC. On the contrary, it would build

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upon that consensus. The PAC could put a proposal privately to the Minister, negotiations could take place and a decision could be taken ultimately by the House.

I apologise for rushing through this speech. There are a number of other matters that perhaps will be elaborated on other platforms. I am grateful for the time that I have been allocated at the end of this important debate and I wish to conclude by paying tribute to the work of the Chairman and my colleagues on the PAC for their work. I hope that the House respects that valuable work and I believe that the country is all the better for it.

9.26 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): This has been a decent and good-natured debate and that reflects the approach that the House wishes to adopt to matters of this kind.

As is traditional for the Front Bench spokesmen of both sides, I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to the PAC, and particularly to the Chairman, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), for his work over the past year and a bit—June 1986 was the last time we were able to discuss these matters in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) made the nicest point when he said that the best tribute that was paid to my right hon. Friend was when the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) almost inadvertently referred to him as "my right hon. Friend". That reflects the approach that we wish to adopt to these matters. After all, we are all concerned with the two main areas of the Committee's responsibilities—its certification work and what its Chairman has described as the "value for money" side of its activities.

My hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) both made important points about the functioning of the Committee and the way in which it relates to Parliament. My predecessor in this role, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), said in last year's debate that thanking the Committee was not just a matter of form because public audit and public accountability were important to Parliament and to the integrity of our system of government. My hon. Friends repeated that sentiment with considerable force.

The Committee has sought to highlight five reports. If time allows, I should like to refer to a number of the other reports, but it would be discourteous to the Committee not to refer to the five reports that it wishes to highlight. Two of them come within the sphere of the Department of Transport, two within the sphere of the Home Office and one within the sphere of the Department of Health and Social Security.

The 50th report dealing with vehicle excise duty evasion and enforcement makes an easily discerned and straightforward point. The Committee calculated that 2·2 million people—too many—are evading payment of the duty, and methods of enforcement are proving insufficiently effective. The cost of evasion is calculated at £100 million a year, and the Committee makes the simple but telling point that if the tax is £100 and the average fine for non-payment is £47, there are those in our society who will be tempted into taking a chance on evasion.

I acknowledge that the Home Office and the Magistrates Association will be asked to review the present position. I note that Sir Alan Bailey told the Committee that with about 300 extra staff he could raise another £1·7 million. It might be more effective if the Treasury were asked to review the nature of the tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East makes a strong case for his constituents and sets out the disadvantages of alternative ideas. I understand that the alternatives carry with them disadvantages of their own, but the Public Accounts Committee will at least have to return to the problem of evasion. Other methods do not carry that problem with them.

The 19th report deals with expenditure on motorways and trunk roads. I am certain that the Committee's recommendations will command widespread support, particularly for the point — the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), among others, mentioned it — about higher standards of new road building to reduce the amount of reconstruction that is necessary. That will strike a chord in the heart of every hon. Member and every motorist who has ever been stuck in a motorway tail-back.

The Committee's recommendations are all based on a fundamental premise:

"DTp made it clear that the Secretary of State regarded the matter of allocation of responsibilities as settled, and that his decision overtook and overrode earlier discussion and the need for a further review. However, the Secretary of State accepted that the present trunk road system did not fit the changing pattern of traffic in all cases, and the Department were currently examining it at the margins.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities drew our attention to the strength of local authorities' opposition to the Secretary of State's decision. They remained firmly convinced that there were important practical, financial and manpower advantages to be gained from a transfer of executive responsibility for trunk roads to local authorities, and that these could be achieved without diminishing the Secretary of State's strategic role."

The conclusion to appendix 1 of the report returns to this issue:

"The Association's case for the transfer of responsibility for trunk roads rests not only on the policy grounds highlighted in the NAO report, but also on the significant financial and manpower savings which would result. The local authority Associations have been treated in a cavalier fashion in the negotiations on this issue by the Government and the Department of Transport whose position is clearly based on self interest and an entrenched antipathy to local government."

Those are harsh things to say, and these are the strategic matters to which the Public Accounts Committee will have to return. I am not convinced—nor is the AMA—that the division of responsibilities is the right one.

Two highlighted reports that concern the Home Office deal with the Metropolitan police and the prison building programme. To take the latter first, my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) was right to emphasise an example of the deficiencies in the present improvement programme, which affects her constituency and the whole county of Durham. The report highlights a number of issues—overcrowding, and the mis-match between the type of prison required and the areas most in need of servicing on the one hand, and the buildings that the Home Office intend to construct on the other. The Committee expressed concern, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne in his speech, that in 1991 there will still be 20,000 cells without basic sanitation. The Committee also touches on issues of design, manpower and matters involving the Property Services Agency's consultants.

A powerful point with which I agree wholeheartedly was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He said that the area of debate on this issue should be widened to include rehabilitation. The Committee's report recommends much closer liaison between the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department and that recommendation may hold the key to a long-term remedy for the problem.

Compared with other European countries, Britain has a surprisingly large prison population. There is much to be gained by examining alternatives to custodial sentences and the probation service and the National Council for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders offers much advice in this respect. The Government should listen to that advice or at least examine it rather than just put it to one side as many of us fear they do. It is also time to examine the issue of cases that have not been brought to trial. Far too many people are in prison for too long before their case is even heard. That in itself is a substantial injustice.

I turn now to what is described in the 45th report as "The unique constitutional and operational position" of the Metropolitan police. The Committee has sought to consider the "patchwork of arrangements"—that is the Home Office's description and not mine — works in practice. The Committee faced a hard job in dealing with that issue. It is a difficult task for a Committee with oversight responsibilities to get to grips with many of the issues that sit alongside the day-to-day control of operational decision making. The issue bedevils the workings of provincial police committees, and I pay tribute to the Public Accounts Committee for having given these issues as good a trawl as could possibly be done.

The overtime issue is one with which it is especially difficult to come to grips, because much depends on operational decisions that are necessarily wholly in the domain of the police. However, we are told that net overtime costs an extra £50 million a year.

I should like to deal with two further issues, the first of which is accounting for expenditure. The report says:

"We note that accountability to Parliament operates primarily through the Home Office, with little direct accountability by Met P. The existing Accounting Officer arrangements have certain disadvantages and the quality and form of information provided to Parliament on the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and performance of Met P is clearly unsatisfactory. In these circumstances we doubt whether the arrangements for Parliament accountability are adequate, and they should be reviewed . . . ".

On the important question whether the Metropolitan police is value for money, the report says:

"We are concerned that, notwithstanding the progress made in developing improved financial control and management information systems, neither Home Office nor Met P are yet in a position to justify the basic level of Met P expenditure. We regard it as important that these systems should be further developed and refined, and we trust that developments in hand and planned will be pursued with high priority . . . ".

The London boroughs have to pay more than £30 million a year to an organisation over which they are able to exercise no real financial control, nor can they be reassured that the Home Office is exercising such control. In a recent report produced by the London Local Authority Associations for the Home Office, the local authorities make this sensible and modest request in their conclusion:

"The use of income and expenditure accounts would ultimately benefit all parties concerned with the finances of the Metropolitan Police. The Police themselves would possess a more realistic indication of their true financial position and would, as a consequence, be able to take better informed decisions. London Boroughs would also be in a position to more fully understand the problems faced by the Metropolitan Police which would in turn promote more meaningful and productive consultation procedures."

That seems to be a modest demand; it is absolutely right. It is inevitable that the House will return again to the issue. The PAC recommendations are good, but I do not think that of themselves they will be enough.

The final report which the Committee asked us to highlight is the 44th report which deals with preventive medicine; it contains a range of important recommendations. I hope that I do not do them a disservice if I focus on just two. My right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Committee read the opening part of paragraph 23. I think he did the full paragraph a disservice by not reading the last two sentences:

"This suggests a less than whole-hearted commitment by DHSS and the health authorities. We note that urgent priority is now being given to implementing the new computerised arrangements, and stress the importance of close monitoring to ensure that the deadline of March 1988 is met."

That is what the report says about screening for cervical cancer. It is not an endorsement of what has gone before. If anything is said with telling effect, that must be it.

The importance of the immunisation programme is rightly stressed in the report. Immunisation is particularly important against measles, whooping cough and rubella. The uptake of immunisation region by region should be encouraged and closely monitored. Those points are made with considerable effect in the report.

I should have liked to discuss other matters, but that would be unfair to the Minister, so I make just one last point. Throughout the topics covered by the Public Accounts Committee two recur out of all proportion to the scope of our national life. One is economic public investment in Northern Ireland; the other is defence procurement. I am sure that the House will return to those matters next year, the year after and the year after that.

9.42 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I shall do my best to respond to many of the points in the 18 minutes remaining, though to cover some 50 reports in that time would be difficult. Although time is short, I should, like everyone else, pay tribute to the work of the Committee and of its Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). His tour d'horizon was a tour de force which went on for an hour. I am doing no more than complimenting him and remarking on his obvious enjoyment, which made his speech a pleasure to listen to. I think that all hon. Members would wish to congratulate him on the work of the Committee and to pay tribute to the other Members as well.

As has been said several times, there has been a considerable increase in the burden of work on the Committee. The right hon. Gentleman outlined the functions of the Committee as first, tracing where money had gone, and second, obtaining value for money. I thought it interesting and notable that he emphasised the first because at one time it was fashionable to dismiss that. But the right hon. Gentleman gave specific examples of where that had been an important part of the work of the Committee. I agree wholeheartedly with his rubric — efficiency, effectiveness and economy as the three criteria to follow in pursuing value for money.

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) made the point that inevitably many of the reports have a certain sameness in their conclusions. So in a sense they should. They are bound to be about inputs and outputs, project control and monitoring. As the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said, the science of these matters is evolving and developing and it is not surprising that the Committee finds many different areas of government on which to turn the spotlight and about which to make similar recommendations.

We regard the work as extremely important. The hon. Member for Norwich, South may be sceptical of some of what the Government have done—I pay tribute to his expertise—but the Government, more than any other, attach enormous importance to the business of government and obtaining value for money in things such as the scrutiny programme mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), which is very important in the mind of the Government.

It would be remiss of me if I did not pay tribute to the work of the NAO, as other hon. Members have done, in particular to the work of Sir Gordon Downey as Comptroller and Auditor General. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Norwich, South has appeared in the debate only to disappear from the Committee. Years ago, when he and I were on the Select Committee on Procedure, he told me how he would revolutionise Parliament when he got on the Public Accounts Committee. I am sorry that he is going after such a short period, although I see that he has passed the torch to his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to, among other reports, the eighth report on "Financial Reporting to Parliament", as did other hon. Members. In one sense that report is the most central of those discussed today.

The Government have done much work to improve the ability to read across from the public expenditure White Paper to the Estimates. We intend that the improvements noted by the PAC will be continued. The two documents ought to be brought closer together and we intend to report further on that to the PAC early in 1988.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South referred to targets, inputs and outputs being published across Departments. That is the direction in which the Committee is moving. Last year's public expenditure White Paper was very much a step forward. As a Treasury Minister, with my experience of the Inland Revenue as a department, I know that cannot be achieved overnight. It requires, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recognise, a certain amount of time and a lot of work to bring about.

Many hon. Members referred to the report on prison building. My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, and the hon. Members for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) referred to that report, although the hon. Lady referred to a particular case. I hope she will understand that I cannot comment on it, but I will draw it to the attention of the Home Secretary. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made some strong comments about the report and about conditions in prisons. I entirely agree with the strong comments made by many hon. Members and I very much sympathise with what the hon. Gentleman said about rehabilitation. Speaking for myself, it is nonsense that we put into prison some people who do not have a long criminal record, in conditions that are absolutely appalling, and it is not surprising that those people turn into more hardened criminals. It has always seemed to me that Dr. Johnson got it right all those centuries ago when he said that the trouble with prison is that half the inmates should not be there and half the people who were not in there should be there. The success of penal colony depends on classification.

It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not recognise the work of the Government. The scandals of the cells, the absence of sanitation facilities and slopping out are terrible, but the hon. Gentleman might have given a little more recognition to the Government for having done more for prisons than any Government for many years. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) deserves enormous credit for what he did when he was Home Secretary. It is a fact that between 1918 and 1958 not a single prison was built in Britain and that is the root of so many of the problems that we face.

The hon. Member for Workington was right to draw attention to the fact that, even after this substantial programme, there will still be a tremendous problem of inadequate sanitation in prisons. Without the tremendous increase in resources that my right hon. and learned Friend has been able to devote to this, the problem would have been much worse. At least the problem will be getting better.

Mr. John Garrett: Surely the point is that not only have the Government built more prison places but they have actually put more people in prison. The prison population has grown faster than ever before since the Government came to power.

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure that the Government can be blamed for that. The increase in the detection of crime should not necessarily be an object of criticism. However, this is beginning to become more of a party political debate than I had intended. I agree that the balance between custodial and non-custodial sentences will be extremely important in that respect.

I think that the Committee recognised that a tremendous amount of work is being done in the design of new prisons. There will be more prisons, both on the modern, galleried model and on the American triangular model, which will be more economical in the use of staff and a step forward.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I cannot give way because an enormous number of points have been made and I should at least attempt to answer them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) and others touched on the Metropolitan police. He was particularly concerned about the inadequacy of the rate at which posts were being civilianised in the Metropolitan police. I shall certainly draw what he said to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I take the point that that has an impact on constituencies such as his, because if the programme were larger, the opportunities for the release of policemen to areas such as his, where he feels that there is a need for them, would be much greater.

This year, in response to the Committee's concern at the pace of civilianisation, the staff ceiling was increased by

250, with a target of releasing 160 police officers. Determined efforts are being made to meet that target. However, the Metropolitan police are now finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain suitable staff, especially for operational support duties and technical work, and the Home Office is working with them to see what improvements can be made to attract staff.

I hope that the hon. Member for Workington will allow me to comment briefly on what he said about whistle blowers. I shall certainly pursue that with the Ministry of Defence. I know that the hon. Gentleman spoke with sincerity when he made his points and I know that he believes his case. I hope that he will accept that, although I do not have the information to reply to him at my finger tips, I recall the outline of the case because I was a Minister at the Ministry of Defence for a short time when some of this matter was discussed.

I just remind the hon. Gentleman of a different view that was also taken in all sincerity. First, one must be convinced—I think that this point was also made in a Treasury minute—that any savings made in contracts came about as a result of information that was given and that this was not something that would have arisen anyway.

The second point is one of principle, at which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) hinted. One must pause before readily accepting the principle that people who inform on companies should automatically be given a pecuniary reward. That poses problems and I know that the Chief of Defence Procurement has devoted much time to thinking about that problem and examining what the hon. Gentleman has said. He came to the conclusions that I conveyed to the hon. Gentleman before. However, I shall certainly undertake to remind the Ministry of Defence about the hon. Gentleman's continuing concern.

Many hon. Members talked about vehicle excise duty and its enforcement—the hon. Members for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, who made it one of the main points in his opening speech. I am afraid that the subject is one that falls foul of the criterion mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton, who said that we should not return to the same subject in another year. This has been a hardy annual with the PAC, I fear. It is a matter of continuing concern. The Committee acknowledged the progress made by the Department of Transport in improving its efforts to combat evasion. Since the Committee examined the subject during the summer of 1986, considerable progress has been made to strengthen enforcement and improve productivity.

During the last financial year, 1986-87, some 345,000 offenders were prosecuted, or made out-of-court settlements with the Department of Transport. The revenue from fines, settlements and back duty exceeded £23 million, an increase of 10 per cent. over the previous year's figure, and some two and a half times the 1982 figure.

The report, and a number of hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, expressed concern at the low average fine imposed by the courts on those convicted of VED evasion. I strongly agree with some of the points that were made. The Government have in the past pointed out the unsatisfactory position to the Magistrates Association. The average total penalty, including back duty and costs imposed last year, was £91, and I certainly do not feel that that was enough. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne made the point that evasion was not going down, but there was a large number of prosecutions. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the penalties are indeed too low.

A point was made about more staff for enforcement. The Government's policy is to increase effort by further improving productivity, and, of course, liaison with the police—drives such as those that we have seen in many parts of the country. I am informed that there was one on the Embankment this morning, only a few hundred yards from here. Such things can be done without extra manpower.

The hon. Members for Swansea, East and for Argyll and Bute raised the question of replacing VED with a petrol tax. I have to agree that it would stop evasion, but, as the hon. Lady and others said, the extra cost of petrol — 39p — would hit essential high-mileage motorists, business, industry and particularly rural areas. We would still need to maintain a central register for use by the police. The Government would change the system only if the benefits clearly outweighed the drawbacks.

I have about a minute and a half in which to respond to a good many points. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne spoke about tackling abuse of mortgage relief, and asked why we did not introduce a system of receipts for building work—the point being, I assume, to ensure that the money was spent on building, rather than on holidays in the south of Spain. We have examined the matter. However, a system of checks would be effective only if it were possible to ensure that it was done in considerable detail. Several million people are involved. We are doing sample checks, which is quite staff-intensive. To carry out complete checks would be very much more costly. We have taken various other measures.

I have missed many of the points that have been made, and I apologise to the House. I have dealt with as many of the points as I could as quickly as possible, and I am very grateful to all those hon. Members who have contributed to the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 15th and 19th to 52nd Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1985-86, of the 1st to 19th Reports of Session 1986-87 and of the Treasury Minutes on those Reports (Cmnd. 9846, 9859, 9917 and 9924, and Cm. 138, 177, 224 and 236), with particular reference to the following Reports of Session 1985-86—

Nineteenth, Expenditure on motorways and trunk roads;
Twenty-fifth, Prison building programmes;
Forty-fourth, Preventive medicine;
Forty-fifth, Financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan Police;
Fiftieth, Vehicle Excise Duty evasion and enforcement.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

HOUSING

That the draft Grants by Local Housing Authorities (Appropriate Percentage and Exchequer Contributions) (No.2) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Road Traffic

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 10th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Weights and Measures

That the draft National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit (Transfer of Functions and Abolition) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 13th November, be approved. —*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Medicines

That the draft Pharmaceutical Qualifications (EEC Recognition) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 27th October, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Customs and Excise

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No.2) (Amendment No. 11) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1902), dated 6th November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Scottish Penal System

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): My reason for calling this debate is to protest about the seemingly total failure of the Scottish Office to exercise its function of political and professional leadership over the Scottish penal system. The only policy that seems to exist is to put up more buildings and more prisons, thus compounding the present mess. There was a capital building programme of £10·5 million in 1984-85, compared with £5·4 million in 1983-84. The erection of buildings often occurs when one runs out of ideas. They are symbols. They are pretences that one is doing something. They are the lazy, dim politician's answer to the question, "What are you doing?" They are a monument to yesterday's problems. The Scottish public is paying a heavy price for the Tory party's appeasement of its backwoodsmen.

My motive in calling for this debate is to ensure that a more effective penal system is introduced that will bring comfort to the people of Scotland. The present system does not work, because 84 per cent. of those who are released from youth custody re-offend within two years, and it is likely that the adult recidivism rate is even higher. There is the maximum expenditure for the minimum return.

What do we have in terms of professional leadership from the Scottish Office? The director of the Scottish prison service has been quoted as saying that prisons should not be seen as places for reform or rehabilitation but as places for containment, albeit humane containment. Is that the sum total of the Government's penal policy —humanely to contain? It is an open secret that the prison service in Scotland has lost its way and that it is the despair not just of the Scottish public but of Scottish Office Ministers, too.

The prison service has lost its way, but there is another group of professionals within the Scottish Office about whom nothing is heard. I refer to the social work services group. This group has a subterranean profile, and if you asked people in this place, Mr. Speaker, what the social work services group is, you would probably be met with a blank gaze; there are blank gazes around the Chamber at the moment. There is not the slightest evidence that the social work services group exists. Is it producing good material that is being stifled within the Scottish Education Department where it is housed, or is it being stifled by Scottish Office Ministers? Is it producing nothing in terms of professional leadership? If so, what will the Secretary of State do about it? Its role is to advise the Secretary of State on the development of services for offenders, as well as for many other groups.

We currently have a policy vacuum within Scotland. It is an official policy vacuum, because in a written reply that I received from the Minister this week about proposals to increase substantially the range and quality of sentencing options available to the courts for the 16 to 21 age group, he said that the Secretary of State had no present plans to extend the existing wide range of sentencing options available to the courts.

We in Scotland have a deplorable record: at least, I think it is deplorable, but perhaps the Minister will give his

views. We imprison more people than any other country in western Europe, and this year we broke the record again by having 5,600 people incarcerated in prison, which is double the figure of England and Wales. When I compare, as I will, Scotland with England and Wales, I should point out that I am comparing the worst with the next worst. Therefore, there is even more dishonour in the figures.

It is not enough to be critical. We must ask why our prisons are so full. There are many people in prison who need not be there. They are there because of the inert nature of the Scottish Office which has failed to give a lead. The first group of such people are fine defaulters. In 1984-85, the number of adults received into prison as a result of defaulting on fines increased by 23 per cent. With regard to young offenders, the percentage rose by 43 per cent. About half the adults received into Scottish prisons were fine defaulters. They received very short sentences, but they cluttered up the system, thus preventing the prison service from doing more serious work. In 1986, there were 10,600 defaulters which is 4,000 more than the figure for 1981. In 1985, half of those received into young offender institutions were admitted because of fine defaulting. In November 1986, half of these defaulters had fines of less than £75. Almost three quarters of those people released from prison were unemployed.

What are we seeking to achieve by imprisoning such people? There are ways of reducing the number of fine defaulters—day fines, better enforcement of fines and community service. Once again, the percentage of prison receptions for fine default in Scotland is almost double that of England and Wales. It can be done, but why is Scotland not doing it?

Another group whose numbers should be reduced are those on remand. Almost 18,000 people were received on remand in 1986, which is three times as many as in England and Wales. The unfortunate aspect of remands is that in the end a large number of people do not receive a custodial sentence. One suspects quite frequently that those who have been put on remand have not been put there for the best of motives. We have evidence that the Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 is not working.

The next group of people who should not be in prison are those who are sentenced for drink-related causes. They clutter up the system in a ridiculous way when a large number of alternatives exist. Scotland has only one designated place for alcoholics — Albyn house in Aberdeen. It has had a tremendous impact in its first year and the procurator fiscal for the area has been able to reduce prosecutions for drunkenness from 600 to a mere 300. Imagine the impact that such centres all around Scotland would have on the prison population. However, the local authorities have no resources to provide them. Their capital allocations are circumscribed by the Scottish Office and extra expenditure is heavily penalised by clawback grant.

Other groups which should not be imprisoned include the severely mentally ill. Recently, the director of the prison service said that within the prisons there were people with serious personality disorders and aggressive psychopaths who simply should not be in prison. He said that the training of prison officers was inadequate to cope with such prisoners.

Other mentally ill people in prisons include those who are a danger only to themselves. That includes people who may have been released from mental hospitals with inadequate community support and who now, as always, go to prison because of the lack of thought on the part of those responsible for running the affairs of this country.

Another smaller but very significant group who should not be in prison includes those now imprisoned because of changes to the parole rules within Scotland. They have created a small but significant group of no-hopers. We must take action to tackle that problem. The impact of that group on the prison system is very serious.

If the Scottish Office tackled the problem, it could make prisons more manageable and more productive. However, there is more to it than that. In the few moments left to me, I want to consider the 16 to 21 age group. As I said earlier, they seem to be neglected in Scotland. A good deal of thought went into the construction of the children's hearings system, but we simply seem to say that at the age of 16, or, in theory, at 18, a person is cast into the adult penal system. If we compare the Scottish system with the English and Welsh system we find that a far smaller proportion of offenders is dealt with in Scotland through methods other than fines, dismissals or custody.

As with almost everything else, community service orders started later in Scotland and developed more slowly, and they are still hamstrung for lack of resources. The courts in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland discovered last year that they would like to place 1,200 offenders on community service orders if the social work authorities could have found places for those offenders. However, once again there are only sufficient staff and resources to provide 400 places.

When we consider that the courts have decided that community service orders are the correct way to proceed and are credible to the courts; that the cost of a community service order is £15 per head and the average cost of a prison place is £260 per head per week; and even worse than that according to the Minister's figures — for Peterhead it is £560 per head a week and for Shotts it is £550 per person per week—we see that the situation is crazy. We should be developing community service orders.

I hope that when the Under-Secretary meets representatives from COSLA tomorrow he will announce a massive extension of the community service order system and 100 per cent. funding for it. That system saves money for the penal system budget. It is simply not right that we should waste public money in that way.

In England and Wales the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has sponsored 45 specialised youth training schemes for offenders involving more than 2,000 places. To the best of my knowledge there is no equivalent in Scotland. With all the changes to the YTS, it becomes more and more difficult to provide specialised youth training schemes of that kind for the most vulnerable in our society.

Where is the professional leadership of the Scottish Office? One is repeatedly struck by the lack of such leadership. Where are the intensive supervision and befriending schemes? Where are the bail hostels and where is the other supportive accommodation, given that homelessness is such a significant predictor of future offending? Why has the Scottish Office done so little to stimulate pre-prosecution diversion along the lines suggested by Lord Stewart in his 1983 report?

I am genuinely in favour of the generic social work service in Scotland, but I have no doubt that Scotland has lost out with the disappearance of the specialist probation service. When the new social work departments were

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

started in 1968, about 50 per cent. of trained social workers were probation trained. The figure is nothing like that nowadays. Unless we tackle the younger age group of 16 to 21-year-olds, who make up 30 per cent. of the prison population—76 per cent. of the prison population are under 30—we shall stoke up the fires in the prison service. It is not good enough to say, "Why did the riot happen? Which individual caused it?" One has to examine the underlying causes, and the underlying cause that we must tackle is the lack of alternatives to prison in the Scottish penal system.

The Minister may well say that I have strayed into the province of the Minister who is responsible for social work. That is the trouble with the Scottish Office; it cannot get its act together.

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to the debate and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his closely argued speech calling for a more effective penal system. I intend to give a comprehensive response. I shall read his speech again tomorrow and at the weekend and if I have not answered any point I shall certainly write to him on it.

The Government are of course concerned at the number of offenders who are sent to prison, and we have therefore taken action in several areas. Imprisonment must be seen as a last resort, particularly in the case of young offenders and adult offenders who have not previously been imprisoned. Accordingly, the Government legislated in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 to place restrictions on courts passing sentences of imprisonment in such cases. Under the 1980 Act, a court cannot sentence a young offender to imprisonment unless he is legally represented, and in the case of adult first offenders, the court must obtain a social inquiry report and state the reasons why no other sentence is appropriate.

On community service by offenders, the Government can claim a creditable record. At the end of 1979, five schemes for community service by offenders were operating, whereas now schemes are available in all regions, covering the majority of Scotland and most of the densely populated areas. In 1980, the number of community service disposals was under 500. By 1985, that number had increased to almost 2,900—an increase of 300 over the previous year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will shortly lay before the House his report on the working of the community service scheme for 1986, which will show that the figure has increased again—this time to more than 3,400.

The Government certainly appreciate the hard work undertaken by local authorities and their employees in developing community service up to its present level.

In the Government's view, community service is an important element in the sentencing options that are available to the courts. It is a disposal that appeals to all schools of penal theory, since it enables the offender to make reparation to society and, at the same time, make a constructive contribution to the welfare of the community. The offender is placed in the role of "helper" and is thus made aware of his responsibilities to the community at large. The ties of work and family are maintained, and they all help to prevent a repetition of the offending behaviour.

The importance—I assure the hon. Gentleman of this point—that the Government attach to this disposal can be seen from the high level of grant that they make available to local authorities towards the cost of schemes. The grant is 80 per cent. for the first five years and 70 per cent. for the following five years.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made clear in a reply on Monday to the hon. Member, the arrangements for providing community service by offenders are at present under review. My hon. Friend will see the social work committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities tomorrow afternoon to discuss a range of subjects, including community service by offenders. From time to time, local authorities have pressed for the level of grant to be increased, or for the expenditure not to be reckoned for grant penalty under rate support grant. The level of 80 per cent. which I mentioned earlier is hardly niggardly. I am not aware that, since the inception of community service, any scheme has been rejected or even delayed for lack of the 80 per cent. central Government grant.

Probation also is a non-custodial disposal that the Government are anxious to foster. It has particular attractions for the bench for certain offences because it has a rehabilitative intention which the hon. Gentleman would support. The number of probation orders made in Scotland, regrettably, fell substantially during the 1970s, from 5,900 in 1970 to 2,400 in 1980. I am glad to say, however, that since then there has been a steady increase, reaching almost 3,000 in 1985.

As evidence of the Government's concern to develop this disposal, we made two provisions in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987 to this end. First, we reduced the minimum length of a probation order from 12 months to six months. That will enable the courts to make more flexible use of probation, and encourage them to use longer periods of probation for more serious offences where custody may be under consideration. Research studies suggest that shorter-term work is effective where the specific problems and difficulties of an individual offender are clearly identifiable, and where he or she is willing to tackle them with assistance from the supervising social worker.

Secondly, we accepted an amendment enabling compensation to be made a requirement of a probation order. Both of our initiatives have been generally welcomed, but as the House will appreciate, it is as yet too early to come to any final conclusion on their long-term effect.

Compensation orders are a worthwhile addition which this Government have introduced to the range of disposals available to the courts at present. They were made available by the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, which allows courts to order an offender to pay compensation for any personal injury, loss or damage caused by the acts which constituted the offence. The use of such orders by the courts to enable victims to receive some reparation from the offender is clearly something that we wish to encourage. Besides the direct benefit to the victim who receives the compensation, the orders may often be more appropriate than a fine, since they draw to the offender's attention the damage or suffering that he has caused and require him to make amends, at least in

part. Their use by the courts has increased from 2,384 orders in 1981, when they were first introduced, to 9,565 orders in 1986.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned fine enforcement, which is obviously an important matter. The fine is the most frequently used disposal in the criminal justice armoury. Roughly four out of every five convicted offenders are fined. It is therefore absolutely essential that the credibility of the fine as a court disposal should be preserved. This implies that there must be tough sanctions against defaulters. Let us not forget that the vast majority of people who are fined at present pay their fines. It is, of course, regrettable that the sanction of imprisonment has to be invoked even to this extent because of the social and financial costs of imprisonment, and because in such cases the court has already decided that the appropriate disposal for the original offence is not custody. However, solutions are not easy to come by.

The Government have appointed 15 fines officers to sheriff courts throughout Scotland in an effort to secure the payment of fines ordered by the courts. These officers assist the offender in managing payment of the outstanding amounts and frequently can provide information to the courts allowing instalments to be set at appropriate levels. We are currently assessing the work that has so far been undertaken in this area and the eventual report should help us to decide whether further development of this work may be fruitful.

The credibility of the fine as a disposal also depends on the courts effectively relating the size of the fine to the offender's ability to pay. The Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 requires sentencers to take offenders' means into account when deciding on the extent of a fine. However, Scottish Office statistics show that the average fine imposed by the courts has been increasing faster than inflation over recent years. There is poor public awareness of the impact of even a small fine on someone who is unemployed and dependent on benefit income for minimum living essentials. Courts may be aware of the impact, but public opinion may lead them to impose fines at a level which reflect the seriousness of the offence rather than the offender's means. I will consider whether there are any steps that I can take to alleviate this problem, and to ensure that fines are properly related to the offender's means without significantly diminishing their essential deterrent effect.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister does not seem aware of the seriousness of the issue of fine defaulting. The statistics that I quoted suggest that about half the intake in young offenders' institutions are there as a result of fine defaulting. What he has said does not appear to measure up to the gravity of the problem.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the problem. As I have just stated, I shall consider whether there are any steps that I can take to alleviate the problem and to ensure that fines are properly related to the offenders' means without significantly diminishing their central deterrent effect.

I have been asked about parole, and, although I should like to speak also about alcoholics and drunkenness, I have only four minutes left.

I am, of course, aware of criticism that has been expressed concerning the Government's parole policy. I do not accept that this policy means "no hope" for many long-term prisoners. The policy allows for "exceptional circumstances" to set aside the presumption against early release for specified categories of both life and fixed sentences. Even in cases where there are no exceptional circumstances, the parole board can recommend that a prisoner be released on parole a few months early. This is a subject that my right hon. and learned Friend is considering carefully at the moment.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): What does the Minister mean by that? Is he considering the whole question of parole or the restrictions that the Secretary of State has imposed on certain categories of offences, because it is the latter that is causing the trouble?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is looking at that subject.

Remands are another area which deserve attention. In case I do not have time to answer the points raised about alcoholics, I shall write fully to the hon. Gentleman. That point is extremely important.

Another area which deserves attention is the extent to which accused persons are remanded in custody, pending trial or sentence. In this connection, Scotland's reception rate for remand prisoners is exceptionally high. About 19,000 remand prisoners are received annually out of a total of 43,000. Scottish Office researchers are about to undertake a detailed study of the bail and remand process in Scotland. The study will address the factors which affect the decisions made in a large sample of cases. These include the factors which affect the police decision whether to hold an accused in custody before his court appearance, the prosecution's decision whether to oppose a bail application and the court's decision whether to grant bail. In the light of the results of the study, it may be possible to determine whether there are any practical measures which would effectively reduce the need for so many individuals to be remanded by our courts.

Mr. Worthington *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I shall not give way, because I have only another minute.

That does not mean that we are not prepared in the meantime to take steps which may have the effect of reducing the numbers remanded in custody where this can be done without prejudicing the administration of justice or the safety of the public. We have, therefore, funded the Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders to look at and report on the problems of making suitable accommodation available for persons awaiting trial who have no fixed address and might, for that reason, have to be remanded in custody. Besides this, the Lord Advocate has recently issued new guidelines on bail to procurators fiscal in the light of experience since the implementation of the Bail Etc (Scotland) Act 1980.

The hon. Gentleman also commented on the number of people with alcohol-related problems in prison. May I assure him that the Scottish prison service makes every effort to help those inmates who have such problems. Medical officers, nursing officers and all other staff are trained to play their part. There are special units at Low Moss prison and Cornton Vale institution for helping those with alcohol problems. In addition, Alcoholics Anonymous holds regular meetings at all establishments and the National Council on Alcoholism and its local

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branches are also of assistance. It is encouraging to note that the number of inmates requiring treatment for alcoholism has declined steadily over the past five years from 1,888 in 1982 to 816 in 1986.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about Albyn house in Aberdeen. As well as that, a grant has recently been offered to the Church of Scotland for a proposed designated place at Raigmore hospital in Inverness. I understand that locally there is general agreement that the designated place in Aberdeen has made a significant contribution to decriminalising drunkenness in the area.

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 4 December 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Public Sector Tenants

9.35 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I wish to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Norwood on the subject of housing and jobs, although identical petitions will come from many constituencies in which people like the residents of Norwood express deep concern about the dearth of homes and jobs in this country.

My petitioners ask that

Resources are made available to enable people to choose to be public sector tenants without suffering as a result of such a choice and to ensure that the wishes and needs of the tenants determine the plans, designs and decisions affecting their homes;

My petitioners pray that

There is an immediate increase in investment in public as well as in private sector housing and a reform of the system of housing finance to re-allocate resources to those in greatest need;

They ask that

There is a priority given to the development of planned programmes of training and retraining to standards set by the construction industry with immediate steps taken to de-casualise that industry.

One cannot condemn a country for problems that lie beyond its control. We do not castigate countries because they suffer from tidal waves or earthquakes. However, if a country faces a problem and the solution to that problem lies within its power, it is morally reprehensible of it to ignore its ability to exercise that power. We regard it as reprehensible if people starve while mountains of food are available. What might——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not enter into argument while presenting a petition.

Mr. Fraser: I understand that, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents ask the House to recognise the ability to match the needs and resources in this country with the needs expressed by thousands of petitioners who pray that this House should give them the chance to rent and live in a decent home. That is the essential and important content of the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

9.38 am

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and myself from the people of Birmingham and Leeds. They have asked us to present the petition because far too many of them are living in unhealthy, damp, black mould-infested housing while they and others are unemployed. They believe that those two needs should be put together so that housing may be improved and people can be usefully employed. They request the House that

1. Resources are made available to enable people to choose to be public sector tenants without suffering as a result of such choice and to ensure that the wishes and needs of the tenants determine the plans, designs and decisions affecting their homes;

2. There is an immediate increase in investment in public, as well as private, sector housing and a reform of the system of housing finance to re-allocate resources to those in greatest need;

3. There is a priority given to development of planned programmes of training and retraining to standards set by the construction industry with immediate steps taken to de-casualise that industry.

It is a shame and a disgrace that, as housing in London, some of it luxury housing, becomes more expensive and glamorous, too many citizens are living in rotten, damp, mould-infested housing. If the House had the will, we could start to put that right.

To lie upon the Table.

Cyprus

Relevant documents: Third Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1986-87, on Cyprus (House of Commons Paper No. 23) and the Observations by the Government on that Report (Cm. 232).

9.40 am

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): I beg to move,

That this House believes that the future of the Republic of Cyprus is best served by the maintenance of a sovereign, independent state, with all foreign troops withdrawn and basic human rights guaranteed; urges Her Majesty's Government to press the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue his mission of good offices; and, in view of the application of the Government of Turkey for membership of the European Community, calls on Ministers to ensure that the Turkish Government is aware of the United Kingdom's concern over the Cyprus problem.

I will not conceal from the House that for the 17 years I have been in Parliament, I have regularly entered the ballot and this is the first time ever that my name has come up. Wishing as always to represent the interests of my constituents, my first thought was to put down a motion regarding the community charge. However, my hon. Friends in the Whips Office pointed out most courteously that they might well have to put a Whip on the Conservative party to come and vote at 2.30 pm, so after some consideration I decided to move to something else of great concern, admittedly to a smaller number of my constituents. Many Cypriots live in Streatham and I have many Cypriot friends who live there.

The Government and the country have a responsibility to Cyprus, whose position has not changed much over the past few years. It seemed to me that this would be a good opportunity to allow hon. Members who have the interests of Cyprus at heart to have a discussion on this very difficult and vexed issue. I very much hope that, in taking the opportunity to call attention to the problems of Cyprus today, we can in some small way give another impetus to resolving the difficulties facing that country.

I have never had the privilege of visiting Cyprus, so I cannot speak at first hand about that country, although I am sure that will be put right by many of my hon. Friends who have had that privilege. I say this right at the beginning, in case later in the debate I should be taxed with not having visited Cyprus. I thought I would get it out of the way.

It might be helpful to the House if I run through the series of events that have caused the present problem to develop in Cyprus. One must start with 1960, when Cyprus became independent of Great Britain and the constitution of Cyprus was drawn up by Great Britain. That decade and the previous ones were great decades for Great Britain, which drew up constitutions for many countries. The constitution of Cyprus was guaranteed by this country, Greece and Turkey. Three treaties were signed: first, a treaty of establishment, which guaranteed independence to Cyprus; secondly, a treaty which guaranteed that the state of independence would exist and continue; and thirdly, a treaty of alliance between the three powers to protect the integrity of Cyprus.

Incidentally, among those treaties were special provisions to allow Greece and Turkey to leave a few troops in the north and south of Cyprus. I understand that Greece left 940 troops and Turkey left 650 troops. I do not think that one can turn one's eyes from the oppression of the minority community in the years following the granting of independence in 1960. We have seen that in other countries. It is something to be deplored, but perhaps not something that should surprise us.

The next major date was July 1974, when two blows were struck at the integrity of Cyprus. The first blow was struck by the military Government of Greece which, it is said—I have no reason to disbelieve it—organised a coup to overthrow the President of Cyprus, with the secondary intention that Cyprus should become part of the Greek state. Within three days, the Greek military Government had been overthrown, so the coup in Cyprus came to nothing, but during those three days there was considerable unrest and military disturbance.

The second blow came—I am not certain whether it was during one of those three days or at the end; perhaps an hon. Member will tell me—when Turkey seized the opportunity of the disruption to invade Cyprus. The reason it gave was that it sought to restore order and protect the state of affairs, which was one of the obligations of the treaty. It sent in troops numbering not fewer than 20,000 and not more than 40,000. There is still argument as to how many Turkish troops actually were in Cyprus then, and how many are there today.

It could be said that when that happened Turkey was acting properly under the treaty of guarantee, but—we come to the crux of the matter—when within three days the Greek Government fell and the coup petered out and disappeared, did Turkey withdraw from its attempt "to re-establish a state of affairs"? No. It dug in and left its troops in northern Cyprus, with a foot firmly on the land. As the months and years went past, it became apparent that the country was partitioned by the Turks with the well-known green line, the line of demarcation between north and south. The partition gradually became established and the troops were maintained.

The north now controls about one third of the land, having only one fifth of the population. Furthermore, across the green line is no freedom of movement without permission and there is no freedom of settlement from one side to the other. Moreover, compensation for those who lived in the north but who were dispossessed, including a small number of my constituents, has been refused.

A matter of some controversy and of great bitterness is that there seems to have been — I shall not say deliberate, but effective — destruction of much of the Christian cultural heritage in the north of Cyprus. It started fairly soon after the invasion. There was an article in *The Times* on 25 May 1976 that said:

"As the Turks have steadily moved into the former Greek villages of the north they have wrought terrible damage and desecration on Greek churches and graveyards. . . It is important to distinguish between random damage that might have been caused by drunks after a night out, and the demolition of crosses, tombstones and heavy marble slabs which weigh several hundredweight and would need men with sledgehammers to destroy them. We found nothing to fit the first category."

I have in my hand a list of 18 churches in the north of Cyprus that have been vandalised, looted or damaged. Various treasures from the north of Cyprus have, in some extraordinary way, turned up in various English salerooms, where they have fetched very good sums of money.

I am a member of the Council of Europe and sit on the Committee on Culture and Education of that council. A report of that committee on the cultural heritage of Cyprus, dated 18 November, states that five historic

churches of artistic importance in the north of Cyprus have been damaged or looted in recent years. The Committee on Culture and Education has decided to send a fact-finding mission to Cyprus to investigate at first hand what may be happening there and to report back to the Council of Europe. In fairness, I should add that a rebuttal by the authorities of northern Cyprus is to be found in the same report. The damage is blamed on the violence that took place during the coup in 1974. The bitterness in Cyprus does not seem to have lessened.

The next date of importance is 1983, when northern Cyprus declared itself to be independent and called itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. No country, apart from Turkey, has recognised the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. I cannot believe that that declaration would have been made by northern Cyprus were it not for the agreement of the Government of Turkey. One must accept that the Government of Turkey, which has 20,000 to 30,000 troops in northern Cyprus, agreed to that declaration. I repeat, however, that the independence of northern Cyprus has not been recognised by any other country.

With the support of the British Government, the United Nations has started to play an increasing role in the affairs of Cyprus. During the last three years, three proposals have been made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Perez de Cuellar. The first was made in January 1985, the second in April 1985 and the third in March 1986. I understand that President Kyprianou did not accept the first proposal of January 1985 because it did not deal specifically with the withdrawal of troops. Mr. Denktash did not find the second proposal of April 1985 to be particularly acceptable, because it included what President Kyprianou had looked for in the first proposal. The third proposal has been lying on the table since March 1986, although it is no doubt under consideration. It deals, among other matters, with whether the north of Cyprus should be recognised, and with the withdrawal of troops.

The fundamental problem—which it is difficult for the Secretary-General of the United Nations to deal with must be dealt with within Cyprus and between northern Cyprus and Turkey. The United Nations initiatives deal with whether Cyprus should be a federal republic, or whether there should be power sharing, with an administration in the north and in the south, and compensation.

The fundamental question is whether in the long run, after a settlement has been reached, Cyprus will be a partitioned country, with two co-operating states, or whether it will be a united and unified country, with two subordinate provinces. If the guarantees of 1960 mean anything, the second proposal must surely represent the most suitable and satisfactory outcome. The experience of other countries shows that if there are two separate and distinct nations within a small island, the government of that island remains unstable and unsatisfactory. The long-term future—I hope it will not be long in coming—for Cyprus must be a unified nation, with two co-operating provinces.

If we believe that that is the way forward for Cyprus, we must accept that between 1960 and 1974 there was some oppression of the Turkish minority. It is difficult to find out how much oppression there was, what form it took, how long it lasted and exactly what happened. However, there was certainly some oppression of the Turkish minority, which leads me to the conclusion that it will be well-nigh impossible to achieve a unified country, with two provinces, unless human rights can be guaranteed for the minority as well as for the majority of the people of Cyprus.

It is likely, if it were announced that Turkish troops were to withdraw tomorrow, that many in the north would feel apprehensive — wrongly, I hope. However, that perception must be taken into account. That brings me to the conclusion that, if a single country is to be achieved, the rights of the majority as well as the minority must be protected. We are all aware of the problems involved in guaranteeing human rights, but they are not insurmountable, especially in a contained area such as Cyprus, if there is good will between north and south and between Turkey and Greece.

Whether those guarantees of minority rights would best come from the guarantor powers—the United Nations, the EEC or NATO—I do not know, but we have a United Nations presence in Ireland—Cyprus; I shall have to look at *Hansard* and delete that—and I should have thought that valid guarantees could be forthcoming from the United Nations, should we move towards that position.

Sir Anthony Buck (Colchester, North): As my hon. Friend is dealing with the United Nations, will he deal with the Greek attitude to the United Nations proposals, which have been accepted by the north and by the Turks, but, regrettably, not by what might be described as the Greek side of the island?

Mr. Shelton: As I said, three proposals were put forward; two in 1985 and one in 1986. My hon. and learned Friend is right to say that the first proposal was not accepted by President Kyprianou because, in his view, it did not deal sufficiently with the withdrawal of troops. The second proposal, a few months later, was not accepted by Mr. Denktash of the north. He felt that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had gone too far in meeting the objections of President Kyprianou.

I understand that the third proposal, which was put forward in 1986, has not been accepted or rejected by the north or the south; it is still lying on the table, but one hopes that it will be picked up and discussed in the near future.

It is clear that the position remains difficult and tense, but hon. Members may have seen a report in *The Times* on 23 November. The headline reads:

"Women brave Cyprus minefields.

Hundreds of Greek Cypriot women, protesting against the division of their island, braved unmarked minefields to cross a UN controlled buffer zone yesterday".

It was also reported in *The Independent*. The report in the *International Herald Tribune* reads:

"Hundreds of Greek Cypriot women bearing white banners stormed and scrambled across the line dividing their country . . . Unarmed United Nations forces . . . joined the Turkish troops to prevent the women protesting far into northern Cyprus".

On a wider front, hon. Members will have seen the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee. I draw attention to paragraphs 61 and 62, which are headed, "The economic situation". Paragraph 61 reads:

"There is a stark contrast between the state of economic development of the two parts of Cyprus".

Paragraph 62 reads:

"In 1985, southern Cyprus, with an estimated population of 544,000, had a per capita GNP of US $4,346, with an

[Mr. Shelton]

inflation rate of 5 per cent. Northern Cyprus, with a claimed population of 160,000 (including settlers), had a per capita GNP of US $1,269, with an inflation rate of 43 per cent.". That is a per capita rate of just over one quarter of that of the south and an inflation rate of 43 per cent., compared with 5 per cent. in the south.

That cannot be satisfactory, and it must be to the advantage of northern Cyprus and Turkey to come to an accommodation. It cannot be right that the northern region is in economic difficulty while the south is booming.

How can we, the United Nations, Turkey or Greece, move forward to resolve this question? Clearly, we shall not resolve it this morning, but perhaps we can give it a nudge forward by airing it in the Chamber. No magic wand can be waved. In the long term it must be resolved, but I hope it is not in the too long term.

There are pressures for certain initiatives. The first, which was mentioned in the Select Committee report, to which I referred a moment ago, is that the United Kingdom Government should convene a top-level meeting between the three guarantor powers — the British Government, Greece and Turkey—to discuss the current situation. This possibility has been mooted as a way forward.

I agree with the Government's observations on the Select Committee report that such a meeting could well be useful at the appropriate time. They say:

"But we do not believe it would be timely for us to propose guarantor power discussions now."

The second initiative is being undertaken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and in their response, with which I agree, the Government state:

"We believe success in international negotiations of this kind is more likely to come about as a result of sustained diplomatic effort, rather than through the dissipation of effort in separate initiatives."

In other words, if they organise guarantor power discussions, it would cut across initiatives made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. That is why in the motion in the Order Paper I have asked the House to endorse and urge the Government to continue to press the Secretary-General of the United Nations to redouble and continue his efforts. He should consider the third initiative that is lying on the table and see whether movement could be achieved.

A third way forward, which must have an effect, is in the growing realisation that Turkey is moving into the comity of western democratic nations. I am sure that the House will agree that we should congratulate Mr. Ozal, the premier of Turkey, on the recent victory at the polls and wish him every success in the task that lies before him of governing his country. Hon. Members may have seen the announcement in *The Times* the day before yesterday of a probable meeting between Mr. Ozal and the Prime Minister of Greece. That must be excellent.

The main burden is Turkey's application for membership of the European Community. I understand that that is being considered by the Commission at present. Paragraph 14 of the Government's response to the Select Committee's report says:

"As the President of the Council of the EC, the Secretary of State took the opportunity of the EC Turkey Association Council in September 1986 to repeat to the Turkish government the Community's concern over the Cyprus problem and its strong support of the UN Secretary-General's efforts to find a lasting settlement".

I find it difficult to see how Turkey can become a member of the European Community while maintaining a small army in a country the integrity of which has been guaranteed by Turkey, Greece and Britain. There seems to be an internal contradiction that I do not believe could be overcome. The tide of history is moving Turkey towards the Western nations — we welcome that — and it is becoming increasingly democratic and looking towards joining the European Community. However, I do not believe that the Turkish army in Cyprus can stay if it is to achieve its ambitions.

I have been talking about long-term initiatives but let me put a proposal for the short-term, about which something could be done quickly if the United Kingdom Government are prepared to take the initiative. I suggest an immediate way forward to increase co-operation between the two communities, increase trade and tourism in the north and south and to bring the people together in co-operation. I must give credit to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) with whom I was discussing the Cyprus problem. He and I perhaps do not see eye to eye on the situation, but I believe that the suggestion shows good sense.

At present, the south—the Republic of Cyprus—has two airports. There is Paphos, which is way down south, and Larnaca, which is adequate but is not one of the best airports. The north also has two airports. The main one, Ercan, is a long way from anywhere and is not entirely satisfactory. There is also the small airport of Gecitkale. Neither of those airports is well positioned or satisfactory.

However, there is Nicosia international airport—this is why I am sure that the Government and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will wish to take an initiative — which has outstanding potential in every way. It is located on the green line between the north and south and, at present, it is used only by the United Nations and is under United Nations control. The proposal is that that airport should be used for international flights serving both the north and south. In no way could that be allowed to imply recognition of the northern Government. It would not.

I suggest that the airport should continue to be under United Nations control and be operated by Greek and Turkish Cypriots, presumably employed in proportion to the population of the two provinces. There should be free access from both the north and the south. Nicosia international airport is a superb airport but it would need a great deal of money to be spent on it for modernisation. I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford that money could well be forthcoming from various sources in the United States. That money could be used to modernise the airport and provide new equipment in order to place it among the best airports in the world.

As part of that deal, would it not be possible to persuade Turkey to withdraw perhaps a division of its troops from northern Cyprus? As I said earlier, no one knows how many troops there are in northern Cyprus but one assumes that there are no fewer than 20,000 and no more than 40,000. A division is about 7,000 men. If Turkey withdrew a division, it would have a tremendous psychological impact but it would in no way lessen what it believes is necessary; guaranteeing the security of the citizens in the north. I do not believe that that is necessary, but that may be the perception in the north. To withdraw a division would in no way endanger the status quo in the north, from which we are trying to move away.

Nicosia airport should be modernised and become a joint airport for the Republic of Cyprus and the northern province. It should remain under United Nations control and should have free access, serving international flights to the north and south. That might help the trade and tourism in the north, which as we have seen when we compare the economic situation in the north to that in the south, sadly needs a great deal of help.

If there were difficulties about the withdrawal of a division it would be possible for the United Nations or NATO to look to give some guarantees. However, I cannot see that that would be necessary because to withdraw 7,000 troops out of 20,000 or 40,000 would not be cataclysmic. If that admittedly limited initiative could be brought about and have some success, there would at least be some movement. We have seen only a hardening of the position since the invasion and the failed coup. We have seen nothing but increased rigidity and conflict between two sides. A small and limited initiative such as this would be a reversal of that tendency. If that could be achieved, and with the tide of history moving Turkey towards the West, within a few years — I hope even earlier—the major problem will be solved.

10.19 am

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) has expressed his views in a serious, measured and conciliatory way without hiding his basic sympathy with the Greek Cypriot position. I hope that I can express my views in a measured way and I would in no way seek to mask my sympathy for the Turkish Cypriot position.

My views are my own, and I suspect that they will diverge from those of the Opposition Front Bench. I have my own experience on which to draw in judging the very difficult situation in the troubled island of Cyprus, which all hon. Members hold in high affection. Whatever our differences, none of us will argue against the interests of the island and the islanders. It is to be hoped that if we express our views in a constructive way others outside may follow our lead.

My views are the views that would be expressed by members of the Turkish Left, at least the democratic Turkish Left—Professor Inonu's party and Mr. Ecevit's party. Both parties are accepted by the Socialist International, so my view could not be regarded by my Front-Bench colleagues as deviant from the democratic Socialist views held by parties such as the Labour party.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham on raising the subject and giving us an opportunity to express our views. Party lines will not be readily discerned in the debate. We shall be seen as sympathising with one group or the other, but we have an obligation to express the facts in a rational manner.

My interest in the eastern Mediterranean goes back many years. I have been interested in it as an academic, as a Member of Parliament, as someone who is interested in defence and, above all, as someone who has watched from afar, and visited on one occasion, an island torn by intercommunal violence. The hon. Gentleman's slip of the tongue—he referred to Ireland—brought to mind hon. Members' impertinence in offering to resolve intercommunal tensions in Cyprus when we have not been remarkably successful in reconciling intercommunal difference in a part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that at the sovereign bases we have Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots working side by side? Does not that show that in its funny old way Britain can contribute positively to easing intercommunal tension?

Mr. George: I shall discuss later the ways of bringing about reconciliation, and the matter to which the hon. Gentleman has referred is certainly part of that approach.

Having read the newspapers, talked to many politicians and visited the island, I have deep sympathy with it. As chairman of the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, I can speak with a degree of authority on the consequences of the domestic situation in Cyprus, which has widespread ramifications for Greek-Turkish relations and for NATO. The hon. Member for Streatham suggested that NATO might somehow underwrite a Turkish troop withdrawal. I remind the hon. Gentleman that Cyprus is very much out-of-area to NATO, and I doubt whether there is the remotest possibility of NATO's seeking to intervene directly, or indeed indirectly, in Cyprus.

We have all observed events in Turkey over the past week and the elections there, confirming Mr. Ozal as Prime Minister for the next few years. Turkey is moving closer to democracy. No country can claim to have arrived. Democracy is a continuous process and we must all strive to improve the way in which we devise our institutions. Nevertheless, Mr. Ozal's remarks on Greece during the campaign, and, indeed, those of Mr. Papandreou, will have been beneficial to future relations. There is every possibility of a meeting between the two in the next three months or so.

A precondition for any improvement in relations in the island will be reconciliation between the "mother countries" of Greece and Turkey. Anything that can be done to improve relations between Greece and Turkey will contribute across the board, and tensions in Cyprus will be eased.

Unfortunately, views that are construed as pro-Turkish are seen by some people as being automatically anti-Greek. I refuse to fall into the trap that some would seek to lay. It is possible to like both Turks and Greeks, and liking one country in no way precludes one's having affection for the other country and understanding its history. The trouble is that the West has not really forgiven the Ottomans for capturing Constantinople in the 15th century. We have never really forgiven the Turks for Gallipoli. Those who have seen the film "Midnight Express" will not forgive the Turks for the barbarous behaviour depicted in it. Our spectacles are coloured by this antipathy for Turkey. The flight information region in the Aegean is seen as the frontier of Christianity, civilisation and democracy, and by some, all to the East is regarded as alien.

However one must recognise Turkey's strenuous and continuing efforts to democratise. That process is far from completed, so it is incumbent on us to consider the situation objectively.

The hon. Member for Streatham gave a brief and sometimes partial account of the history of events in Cyprus since 1960. The House has an interest in that history because, as the imperial power, Britain bears much

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of the responsibility for the events in Cyprus. In the words of the Foreign Affairs Committee in its third report, which I recommend to those outside who have not yet read it:

"Cyprus is one post-colonial responsibility which the United Kingdom cannot afford to evade, if its own interests are not to be prejudiced."

We have a historical responsibility and a legal obligation as one of the guarantor powers. Many Cypriots live in this country and many of our people live in Cyprus. We have a large military presence, guaranteed by the 1960 constitution, and we are Cyprus's major trading partner. We have moral, legal, historical and economic motives for wanting the differences in Cyprus to be reconciled.

History is most important. From paragraph 26 onwards, the report is well worth reading. The 1960 constitution was foisted on Cyprus by Britain, and regrettably quickly proved to be unworkable. However, the attempt was noble. The attempt was to constitutionalise the fact that there were two communities in Cyprus — a majority of Greeks and a substantial minority of Turks. For a while, both communities were involved, to a degree, in decision-making. However, in 1963, there was a crisis which led to the collapse of the system of government and the 1960 settlement.

The Foreign Affairs Committee report says:

"Although the Cyprus Government now claims to have been merely seeking to 'operate the 1960 Constitution, modified to the extent dictated by the necessities of the situation', this claim ignores the fact that both before and after the events of December 1963 the Government of President Makarios continued to advocate the cause of Enosis"—

union with Greece—

"and actively pursued the amendment of the Constitution and the related Treaties to facilitate this ultimate objective."

In those days, the Greek Cypriots desired union with Greece. That led to the constitutional amendment that would have destroyed the constitutional status of the Turkish Cypriot community which led in turn to the 1963 crisis.

Post-1963, the Turks were huddled into their enclaves and not protected by the Cypriot armed forces. The Foreign Affairs Committee said that there were between 8,000 and 10,000 mainland Greek soldiers on the island, in contravention of the 1960 agreements. The present Greek Government can accept no responsibility for what was done by previous Greek Governments, but, in talking about the alleged illegal occupation of the island by Turkey, one must remember that there was a substantial Greek military presence on the island during those troubled times in the 1960s.

We have been told that there was "some oppression" of the minority community. I do not wish to exaggerate — others may put the case more strongly — but the position between 1963 and 1974 was shameful. Atrocities were committed on both sides, but people must look objectively at what happened. The events of the 1960s and early 1970s led the Turkish Cypriot population to believe that their rights and lives could not be guaranteed by any means other than their endeavours and those of the Turkish armed forces. The legacy of the period is not only paranoia of the Turks about the Greeks, but, because of Turkey's reaction, reinforcement of the Greek Cypriot paranoia towards Turkey. No country can have been so adversely affected by its recent history as the unfortunate country of Cyprus.

The attitude between 1963 and 1974 was hardly one of charity by the majority towards the minority. In 1974, there was the Athens-inspired military coup in which President Makarios barely escaped with his life. He described in graphic detail to the Security Council what happened:

"What has been happening in Cyprus since last Monday morning is a real tragedy. The military regime of Greece has callously violated the independence of Cyprus. Without trace of respect for the democratic rights of the Cypriot people, without trace of respect for the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, the Greek junta has extended its dictatorship to Cyprus."

These were nightmare years for both communities, especially in the northern part of the island. The coup was undoubtedly designed to enforce Enosis, and Greece had violated the 1960 constitution.

Eventually, in 1974, the Turkish armed forces intervened because people of a similar ethnic group were being murdered. The Foreign Affairs Committee said that if those troops had left it at that, they might have been treated as heroes. There was every justification for their action because they acted according to the constitution. If the British Government could act to defend the interests of 1,800 islanders in the Falklands, with none of them killed, one can understand why the Government of Bulent Ecevit, the leader of the Republican People's party, stepped in. That party is affiliated to the Socialist International and he is held in high esteem by the Labour party.

The Turkish Army intervened, but the critical aspect was not the first intervention, but what was seen as the second phase, which incurred the wrath of the international community. The Turkish Government acted because the Turkish military was dangerously exposed and because they wanted to establish an area controlling Greek Cypriots—so that they could bargain them away for the Turkish Cypriots who were in considerable danger in the Greek-controlled part of the country—and because they wanted to establish a greater economic and population base. Their action has been condemned by many people, but that is the justification as expressed by the Turks.

We must accept that there are two de facto Administrations in Cyprus. We must find an international and domestic environment in which the problem can be solved. A number of proposals have been made. Ultimately, I should like the Turkish troops to withdraw. The hon. Member for Streatham referred to the unilateral gestures by Turkey and the withdrawal of a division, but I eagerly wait to hear what reciprocal unilateral gesture —almost a contradiction in terms—will be made on the other side of the island. Gestures to create confidence must be two-sided. I hope that these unilateral or bilateral gestures will break the political logjam.

The island is bicommunal. If it is to survive and not to continue to stare down the barrel of other countries' guns, its bicommunal status must be underpinned and maintained. Many have sought to offer their good offices —the Commonwealth, the United Nations, NATO, the non-aligned movement, the Islamic Conference and individual countries such as Britain, Canada and the United States — yet all the endeavours, most of them sincere, have come to nothing. In recent years, the Soviet Union has taken an interest in Cyprus, but, as the Foreign Affairs Committee said, the idea of an international conference is premature. I would put it more strongly and say that it is an attempt by the Soviet Union to take

advantage of the divisions between Greece and Turkey and to intervene in an area in which it has little involvement. I do not regard the Soviet Union's good offices as other than a cynical attempt to gain political advantage in an area which already has enough problems without the East-West dimension being injected into it.

A number of theoretical solutions have been advanced. One such solution is maintenance, somehow, of the status quo. We have been told that the southern part of Cyprus is prospering. Perversely, there is an interest in the status quo being maintained. Greece has some advantage in having at hand a weapon with which to hit the Turks constantly on the head. Perversely, if the Greeks can portray the Turks as an evil empire, whereby they forcibly occupy as defenceless country, and as long as there is animosity between Greece and Turkey, the present position may be maintained. Some people do not admit that the Greek Cypriots are prospering and that there is some satisfaction with the present position. Those to the north would say. "We are now safe in our beds. We no longer face the prospect of being dragged out of our beds, beaten up, jailed or even worse; we are now protected by the Turkish army." Perversely, the current position has attractions, but I would not endorse any suggestion that this unhappy stalemate should or could survive.

Another solution that I reject, is incorporation of each part of the country into the mainland countries. That is a possibility—the Greek Cypriots have long cherished the idea of union with Greece and the Turkish Cypriots might think that their security would be enhanced if that approach were adopted—but I reject that solution, as, I think, would most other people.

I also reject the unity solution, if unity means majority rule. Cyprus was heading for that in the early 1960s. However, democracy is not majority rule. If majority rule means that the majority can use its numerical superiority to exploit and undermine the minority, that is a negation of democracy. We have found such a situation in Northern Ireland, where the majority sought to dominate the economic, political, social and educational institutions to the detriment of the minority.

I reject the idea that the island should be ruled by the majority making some token concessions to the minority. That is not good enough. The Turkish Cypriots would not be prepared to contemplate even remotely a situation such as that which led to the current crisis. If we reject unity, incorporation and the status quo, the solution must surely lie in recreating a constitution in which the majority and the minority have rights that can be guaranteed. There have been occasions when that has been a likely prospect. Indeed, that was the situation after the initiatives of Perez de Cuellar.

The first version was the initiative of 1985 after the so-called "proximity talks" in 1984. They were accepted by President Denktash, but rejected by President Kyprianou. The details had been made public. They aimed to create a non-aligned, bicommunal, bizonal federal republic. The presidency would be held permanently by a Greek Cypriot and not rotated between Greeks and Turks. The vice-president would be Turkish. A senior Ministry, such as the Foreign Ministry, would be held by a Turk. Foreign armed forces would be withdrawn. That was agreed by the Turkish Cypriots, but rejected by President Kyprianou.

The second version came in April 1985 when Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar had worked on the Greek Cypriots. This proposal was accepted by President Kyprianou but rejected by the Turkish Cypriots on the grounds that they were in the midst of a referendum and parliamentary elections and that confused their response. However, they also believed that they had made their maximum concessions, but that they had been rejected by President Kyprianou.

The next version was the third draft framework agreement, brought forward by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the end of March 1986. The hon. Member for Streatham was slightly wrong—he was half right—in saying that it had been neither rejected nor accepted by the Greek or Turkish Cypriots. He was wrong, because that draft framework agreement was repeatedly accepted by the Turkish Cypriots, and rejected by Mr. Kyprianou. The Turks found themselves in a rather unusual situation because for a long time world public opinion had seen the Turkish Cypriots in a negative light, but it was not the Turkish Cypriots who had rejected Perez de Cuellar's initiative.

International public opinion is not as simplistically deployed as previously. As one distinguished academic, Professor John Groom has said, the Greek side has again shown less interest in a rightful settlement of Cyprus than in a settlement on Greek terms.

After President Kyprianou's rejection of the proposals, Perez de Cuellar stated:

"the procedures proposed in the draft framework agreement provided each side with every opportunity to ensure that the negotiations proceeded in a manner that took full account of their concerns and that the concept of an integrated whole meant that the parties' ultimate commitment to an overall solution would depend on the resolution of all issues to their mutual satisfaction . . . By March 1986 I believed that the differences between the two sides could be bridged by a decisive effort. I therefore presented to them the draft framework agreement of 29 March 1986. I remain convinced that, if accepted by each of the two sides, this document will provide the right framework for negotiating a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus problem . . . I regret that, since one side is not yet in a position to accept the draft framework of 29 March 1986, the way is not yet open to proceed with the negotiations I have proposed for an overall solution. In these circumstances I am convinced by the dangers inherent in the present situation. The way forward will require careful reflection by all concerned."

Perhaps it is wrong to maintain that the 1986 draft framework is still the basis for a settlement, but I believe that it still is. When one simplistically portrays post-1960 history, using an approach of selectivity on one side or another, one reaches dangerous conclusions. There must be an agreement which, I hope——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. George: Yes, with pleasure.

Mr. Anderson: To avoid the same selectivity, it might be helpful if my hon. Friend continued by relating the latest position of the Secretary-General of the United Nations who, in his last report, informed the Security Council that he had suggested that a process of informal discussions by initiated between both sides. He said in March this year:

"the Greek Cypriot side informed me that it accepted this suggestion for informal talks. The Turkish Cypriot side advised me on 15 May 1987 that it would not accept my suggestion, unless the Greek Cypriot side first accepted the March 1986 document."

Mr. George: The document that was agreed by the Turkish Cypriots in 1986 should be the basis of any

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agreement. The Greek Cypriots have realised that they have been wrong-footed in the international community. I hope that there will be attempts to create a genuine conference and that in the coming months the Turkish and Greek Cypriots will operate and discuss the Secretary-General's initiatives within his framework.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green) *rose*——

Mr. George: I shall give way in a moment.

I hope that we shall see a continuation of that process. The great need is to sort out the difference between genuine positions and posturing. Clearly, both sides have an eye to the international community. Therefore, one must try to pin them down and to progress from talks and not simply run along with them if they are trying temporarily to exploit the situation for public relations purposes.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has referred to the acceptance by the Denktash group of the March 1986 proposals. Was that not on the condition that there should always be a Turkish armed presence in Cyprus and is not that why it was unacceptable to the Greek Cypriot Government? Is it not also true that the Greek Cypriots were prepared to accept the April 1985 proposals of the Secretary-General, but that the northern Turkish Cypriots were not prepared to do so?

Mr. George: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I have outlined the three negotiating points. I said that the Turks had accepted two proposals and the Greeks one. I was not seeking to evade or avoid the fact that one proposal had been accepted by the Greek Cypriots. No one wishes to be too immersed in the minutiae of negotiations. One must bear in mind what has happened, but one must look forward. Although one may look backwards, one should spend more time looking forward. That is why, in my concluding remarks, I shall look at what might happen.

Unilateral gestures should be taken and the suggested withdrawal of a division would be feasible. The Turkish Cypriots have established an airhead and a port, so they could swiftly reinforce the island, should the need arise. The British Government have similarly substantially withdrawn forces from the Falklands because now, with Mount Pleasant airfield and the rapid reinforcement capability of transportation in wide jets, it is feasible to lower the military presence. I am sure that something similar could be done in Cyprus. I hope that the other side will also make gestures to demonstrate its good faith. Perhaps the Republic of Cyprus could seek to end its embargo on northern Cyprus which its Government are seeking to maintain. Unilateral gestures from both sides would not be out of place.

We must remember that Cyprus is not and has never been a nation in the accepted sense of the word. It was a colony ruled by a foreign power which could maintain its position administratively, politically and militarily. The vacuum created by the British withdrawal left the two communities at each other's throats. Cyprus has never been a nation; it was temporarily a state.

We must get this logjam unblocked to create a genuine state. Surely the key lies in Ankara and Athens. Whether we like it or not, the domestic politics of both parts of the island are, if not orchestrated, at least influenced by the Governments of Greece and Turkey. They play a considerable role economically, militarily and politically. We must point out to the Governments of Greece and Turkey that disputes over the Aegean, flight information regions and territorial limits, the historical emnities between Greece and Turkey, and everything that divides the two democratic Governments must be addressed, diminished and resolved.

I hope that we do not fall into the trap of seeing the problems purely in terms of Cyprus. We must stand back geographically and agree that any progress is likely to come as a result of several initiatives on several fronts over a period of time. We should not pin all our faith on the Secretary-General; there should be other initiatives worthy of consideration.

The ultimate key is to get a decent relationship between Mr. Papandreou and Mr. Ozal, whose authority has been increased since he was democratically re-elected. The hope of a possible summit certainly gladdens my heart and I hope that a resolution of the Cyprus problem will be high on the agenda of any forthcoming meeting.

I thank the hon. Member for Streatham for giving us this opportunity to debate Cyprus. Whatever our differences, we must surely all be united in the view that that troubled island's history must somehow be reversed. We must all hope that one day in the not-too-distant future the two communities will not be separated by a line or protected by large armed forces, but will be able to live in an era of good relations. If, in some tiny way, we can contribute towards that, our debate will have been worth while.

10.53 am

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) for taking this opportunity once again to discuss Cyprus. All of us owe a debt to the people of Cyprus and it is right and proper from time to time to examine the position there to see whether there is anything more we can do to help them escape from the trap which they seem to have got themselves into, often through no fault of their own.

I was sad to hear that my hon. Friend had not yet visited Cyprus and I hope that that will be rectified and he will be invited by both communities to see what a remarkably beautiful place it is and full of so much promise, which unhappily has been dashed over the past few years. I spent some three years in Cyprus, perhaps not in the right way, and I grew to love the island and the people. Therefore, it is a great sorrow and tragedy for me to see it reduced to the present position.

Some would say that we do not want to rake over the past, but we cannot understand the position in Cyprus today without looking backwards a little amd putting some facts into historical perspective. What a tragedy it is that in the early 1960s we got into the situation that we did. If only the guarantor powers had lived up to their responsibilities. But from day one they turned their backs on them. The crucial time when they could have lived up to their responsibilities was December 1963. If ever we should have used our right as a guarantor power, we should have used it then, but we did not.

If only Archbishop Makarios, who in many ways was such a great man, had abandoned the thought of Enosis which remained with him almost from the day after independence was declared. Indeed, in one of his earliest

speeches he talked about Cyprus being a Greek island, which was not exactly the way to build up confidence between the two communities.

If only that evil band of men, the EOKA-B, under Nicos Sampson, had been dealt with in the 1960s and exorcised from the community, it might have been possible for the two communities to come together. Sadly, none of those events happened, so we come to the events of 1974. The coup took place, the attempted assassination of the archbishop failed, but it forced him to flee from the island and the evil men with the support of the junta took over in Nicosia. If only we had had a British Government prepared to live up to their responsibilities, but we did not.

The Select Committee report in 1975-76 stated:

"There is little doubt in your Committee's opinion that, either alone or as part of a United Nations force, Britain could have forestalled the first Turkish invasion . . . Britain had a legal right to intervene, she had a moral obligation to intervene, she had the military capacity to intervene. She did not intervene for reasons which the Government refuses to give."

I point to the Opposition Benches and condemn the guilty men who at that time had the right and duty to intervene. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Gentlemen may laugh, but Mr. Ecevit came to London and begged the Government to intervene, as they had a duty to do as a guarantor power. One hour after an intervention, there would have been British forces in Nicosia, Sampson would have fallen and although there might have been a token landing of Turkish troops at Kyrenia, that would have been the end of it. That did not happen because the Government of the day——

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington) *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: No, I will not give way. That did not happen because the Government were far too involved in the election that was due to take place in October 1974. They did not want to muddy the water. I say to all my Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot friends that they should never forget that a British Government failed in their duty, because in the report of that Select Committee it is quite clear that the Government of the day failed to intervene. Even to this day, our Government cannot go into the detail of just why that did not happen, but in our hearts we know quite well why the Government of that time did not intervene. Now we have to live with the reality of a divided Cyprus.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

BBC (Injunction)

11 am

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon) *(by private notice)* asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his actions yesterday in the High Court concerning the BBC.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Yesterday morning, 3 December, the *Daily Telegraph* carried a story in the "Peterborough" column that began with these words:

"There are, I learn, jitters at Broadcasting House ahead of tomorrow morning's transmission of the first of three 45-minute Radio 4 programmes about the British security service. They feature no fewer than eight of its former employees and, even more controversially, one civil servant who still works at GCHQ".

The third paragraph reads:

"The most remarkable aspect of the programmes, which are presented by Paul Barker, is the cast of former spies who have agreed to speak publicly about their secret world. These include three ex-MI5 people, three MI6 agents and three from GCHQ — all described by an insider as 'better witnesses than Wright, if sometimes a bit obsessional' ".

The concluding paragraph reads:

"The serving GCHQ official, who will be named in tomorrow's programme, is featured for only a few seconds and, I'm told, is 'discreet'. But the fact that he agreed to be interviewed in the first place is likely to set the alarm bells ringing round at the Treasury Solicitor's office."

As the House knows, members and former members of the security services are under a lifelong duty to the Crown of confidentiality in relation to information deriving from their employment. In the interests of the security of this country, the Government attach high importance to protecting that confidentiality. In the light of the evidence contained in the *Daily Telegraph* story, the Treasury Solicitor spoke yesterday morning to the legal adviser of the BBC. He informed the legal adviser of the information that he had read and asked if it was true. He was told that it was indeed true that nine members and former members of the security and intelligence services would take part in the programme, all of them identified by name, but that in the opinion of the legal adviser who had considered the programme carefully, none breached his duty of confidentiality. He said that the *Daily Telegraph* story was a gross over-representation of the contents of the programme.

The Treasury Solicitor said that, without sight of the transcript, he was unable to rely on the legal adviser's opinion that there was no breach of the duty of confidentiality that was owed to the Crown, and he asked for a copy of the transcript. This was refused, as was a request for all the names of the members and former members of the security services who were interviewed.

Following consultation within the Government, the Treasury Solicitor later asked for a copy of the transcript limited to the contributions of those members and former members of the services. This, too, was refused. The BBC was then put on notice of the Government's intention to apply for an injunction. At 4.30 pm yesterday, on behalf of the Government, I applied by counsel to Mr. Justice Henry in chambers for an interim injunction. The BBC was represented by leading counsel.

The Government sought an order restraining the BBC in the following terms:

"from broadcasting, or causing or permitting to be broadcast, as part of a radio programme entitled 'My Country Right or Wrong' scheduled to be broadcast by the BBC on Friday, 4

[The Attorney-General]

December 1987, or in any way whatsoever, any interviews with, or information derived from, current or former members of the security or intelligence services of the United Kingdom relating to any aspect of the work of the said services, including their identity as current or former members thereof."

The judge heard argument from counsel for each side and made the order in the terms requested on my undertaking to issue a writ forthwith and to serve on the BBC the draft affidavit that was before the judge. He also gave the BBC liberty to apply on 24 hours written notice for the variation or discharge of the order.

Mr. Morris: Is it the view of the Government that allegations of illegal and subversive action must never be published without newspapers first informing "the proper authorities"? Is this not censorship, of the kind emulated by every tinpot dictatorship; and were not these programmes discussed with the security services and the D notice committee, who were satisfied with the generality of the programmes? Secondly, was this gagging injunction sought not because it related to the content of the programme, but in order to counter the charge of inconsistency in relation to the treatment of "Spycatcher" and other books.

Thirdly, which interpretation of the order do the Government rely upon? Do they rely on the reportedly wide one of the Attorney-General's office in accordance with the July ruling of the Court of Appeal, that it applies to every organ in addition to the BBC and to every person wherever he be, or do they rely on the narrow one reported in *The Times* this morning of the No. 10 view that it applies only to this series of programmes? Which is it?

The Attorney-General: In answer to the first part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question, it is not for me to comment upon a matter that is directly in issue in the current litigation in the High Court involving *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and the *Sunday Times*. There is no question of censorship in the action that I took yesterday on behalf of the Government. However, there is every question connected with the duty of the Government to protect the confidentiality that is owed to them by members and former members. Had the BBC been prepared to meet the reasonable request of the Treasury Solicitor to see the passages of the transcript limited to the contributions from members and former members of the service, great difficulty would have been overcome. *[Interruption.]* There seems to be a certain discrimination today about freedom of expression.

In answer to the third part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question, yesterday was the first occasion on which the Government learned evidence from the source that I have described of the full extent of the programme. I am told that learned leading counsel for the BBC made no comment upon the width of the injunction and limited his comment on the proposed order to saying that at least it had the merit of being clear. However, I must make it perfectly clear that he objected to any injunction. It is not for me to interpret the order made by the judge. It speaks for itself.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): In congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on his robust, timely and entirely necessary action—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mates: If I wanted confirmation that I was right, the laughter of the Opposition over this serious matter would confirm it utterly.

May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend what the position would have been if he had not taken this action and if the programme had gone out? If there had been a breach of security in that programme—perhaps made unwittingly by the BBC—where would we have been, because the press would immediately say that it was then in the public domain and could be repeated? That would be the end of any success that any Government could have to keep secrets secret.

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is completely right. We know that considerable importance and significance is attached by those who wish to publish matters that may well be sensitive in the security sense to the fact that the information is in the public domain. My hon. Friend is right to say that there was a real and patent risk that if material went forth of the sort described in The *Daily Telegraph* article, and it was material that was obtained or published in breach of the duty of confidentiality, it might well be said thereafter, "Now it is in the public domain. Perhaps it should not be, but it is." In that way, the boundaries are pushed further back. That was not a risk that the Government felt that they could properly take.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Is the Attorney-General aware that the only benefit that his injunction has brought the country is that this morning a 45-minute interview with the leader of the Liberal party has been broadcast in place of the scheduled programme? That does not sufficiently impress me as a reason to support the Government's action. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that he is saying that yesterday, in lumbering into this legal action, he acted on the basis of an article that appeared in a gossip column? The right hon. and learned Gentleman has ignored the fact that the nature of the programme has been known over many months—for example, to Conservative Members who appeared in it.

The work involved has been done under the authority of the controller of Radio 4, a full description of the programme has been publicly advertised in the *Radio Times* for more than a week, and the programme has the authority of the director-general. Surely the right hon. and learned Gentleman's action should have been limited to calling the attention of the director-general of the BBC to the public obligations of the corporation. Will he accept that most of us believe that this is yet another symptom of the dangerous slide into authoritarianism into which the Government are taking the country?

The Attorney-General: I dispute vigorously the last part of the right hon. Gentleman's question. I agree entirely that there is every advantage to the country in hearing as much as possible from the right hon. Gentleman on the wireless. No doubt we heard him at 10.30 or whenever it was this morning.

It is wrong to suggest that the Government were motivated by authoritarian considerations. The Government wish to protect the security of the United Kingdom by protecting the duty of confidentiality that is owed by all former members of the service.

It is not much of a criticism to say that the Government were spurred into the action that they took by an entry in

a gossip column. If the Government did nothing, having been put upon clear notice, as it might later have been said, of the content of the programme and the quality of its individual contributors, it would then be said that they blow hot and cold.

There was no means by which the Government properly and responsibly could have ignored the detailed story that appeared. That is why the Government spoke, through the Treasury Solicitor, to the legal adviser of the BBC. The legal adviser knew well the burden of duty that the Government consider they are obliged to protect, and he was unable to disclose the transcript.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Would my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that, as one of those who recorded a contribution to this potential programme, I recognise the total distinction between an analysis of the purpose and need to protect the security services, which is a legitimate subject for the BBC to organise a programme around and in which I and others thought that we were participating, and the Government's absolute right to insist that their former servants abide by the contracts into which they entered, especially when the security of the nation can be in any way prejudiced if they do not? My right hon. and learned Friend has properly drawn the attention of the House to that distinction.

The Attorney-General: The House will attach the greatest importance and weight to what my right hon. Friend has said, coming from someone who discharged his responsibilities. We do not criticise the individual contributors to the programme, and among them were many distinguished people, including my right hon. Friend. We criticise only those who may have done so in breach of the duty of confidentiality that they owed to the Crown. I do not know whether they have done so. I could have been put into the picture had the Treasury Solicitor's request for the names been granted, but it was not. I could not have possibly advised my colleagues to accept that risk.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The Attorney-General has made an astounding statement. He has used the phrase "may have done". He does not know whether any duty has been breached. In effect, he is saying that we should not have any proper, serious and responsible discussion about the role of the security services because some who participate in the discussion may or may not reveal that which is confidential. How can there be serious and responsible discussion about the security services unless ex-officers of the services tell us what happened, without giving away secrets? Is it not clear that once again the Government are trying to cover up something that is rather nasty? "Spycatcher" has revealed that the previous Labour Government were being undermined by a service that we all ought to know more about.

The Attorney-General: I reject the hon. Gentleman's assertion that no Government are ever entitled to seek an interim injunction from the High Court to prevent possible damage of a serious nature of which there is a real risk. I cannot go before any court without affidavit evidence to substantiate that contention. That is what I did yesterday, to the apparent satisfaction of an independent High Court judge. The hon. Gentleman advances an extraordinary contention in saying that in every instance we must wait until the horse has left the stable before we can take any legal measures. That cannot be right. He should address himself to the question whether it is right for the Government to protect the duty of confidentiality in the interests of national security. If he agrees that it is right that they should so protect that duty, how is that to be done if we have always to wait until the horse has left the stable?

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that each officer signs a vow of confidentiality both when he joins the service and when he leaves it? Does he agree with me that their failure to honour that vow puts at risk the security of our country and affects the trust of other countries in our security services? Does he further agree with me that the attitude of Opposition Members underlines their lack of concern for the security of our country?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right in drawing attention to the fact that every member of the Security Service knows full well his duty of confidentiality. He is right also in pointing to the danger that can arise to the country if that duty is allowed to be broken. There are many, various and not always foreseeable ways in which serious harm can be done if former members of the service are allowed to speak on matters that came into their knowledge by reason of their employment.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): As the programme was discussed with the security authorities and the D notice committee, as the programme has been quite some time in preparation and as the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), and the previous Lord Chancellor participated in it, why has the Attorney-General issued a peremptory ban on the BBC on the very eve of the broadcast? Why did the Government not act before if they felt it necessary to do so?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. Gentleman should know that I have issued no ban. A ban has been made of an interim nature that can be reconsidered at 24 hours notice by an independent High Court judge. I have no power to issue a ban.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): A nice point.

The Attorney-General: Yes, and an important one. I hope that it is a distinction and a function that will always remain under our constitutional arrangements. I do not wish to see a member of the Executive able to impose a ban, and I hope that that is the view of the hon. Gentleman who interjected.

As to the scale and date of knowledge of the scope of the programme, the first day upon which the Government had notice and evidence of the full scope of the programme was yesterday.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend will reconsider the last part of his reply? Is he aware that, long before the *Daily Telegraph* gossip column caused such excitement in Whitehall, some of the retired security service officers who took part in that discussion programme had actually written and informed the director-general of the security services of their participation and the content of their contributions—apparently with no objection from the director-general?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept, from someone else who took part in those hitherto rather

[Mr. Johnathan Aitken]

obscure radio programmes, that they have virtually nothing to do with current national security or past operational matters? They were largely taken up with a somewhat academic discussion of accountability and the need for further oversight. Is that not a legitimate area on which retired security service officers can comment?

Will the Government cool down a little and try to draw a line between the necessary confidentiality of the security services and the responsible need for a democratic discussion about them in a more appropriate place?

The Attorney-General: There had been notification by one former Government servant of the fact that he had been invited to contribute, and had contributed, to a programme. No information was available to the Government about the scope and scale of the programme until the story appeared in the newspaper yesterday. I will not repeat the grounds that the Government considered sufficient, and indeed imperative, to lead me to act in the way that I did yesterday on their behalf, based upon that article.

On the question whether I would accept from my hon. Friend his account of the content of the programme, of course I attach tremendous weight to anything that he says to me. However, when dealing with matters of national security, especially the integrity and confidentiality of the security and intelligence services, I am afraid that no responsible Government could conceivably take a risk without seeing the text of the programme—or at least without knowing the full names of those taking part. That was the request made to the BBC, but it was denied.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Will my right hon. and learned colleague explain how he equates his statement to the House with the statement of the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the House on 3 March, that nothing that had been said by Mr. Fred Holroyd or Mr. Colin Wallace had anything to substantiate it? There was a similar statement by the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, that there was not a shred of evidence to support the accusations of Mr. Holroyd and Mr. Wallace.

Given that most of the serving officers who contributed to the programme notified the Government of the nature of their comments, is not the real reason for the ban the Government's determination to continue to deny the allegations of Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace? Is not the real person being protected not the state and not security, but the Prime Minister, who has been the major figure in the cover-up of what went on in our dirty war in Ireland? She knows——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Are the gentlemen that the hon. Gentleman mentioned relevant to the case? He must confine his comments to the case.

Mr. Livingstone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point is that there is an attempt to suppress the programme because Holroyd and Wallace are interviewed in it. Is it not an attempt to continue that cover-up because the Prime Minister is clearly guilty of knowledge of the treasonable actions of MI5 officers in Ireland during the period of the last Labour Government?

The Attorney-General: Had I any information on whether Mr. Holroyd and Mr. Wallace were among those who contributed to the programme, I might have been able to answer the hon. Gentleman. Of course, I would have that knowledge only if the BBC had agreed to tell the Treasury Solicitor yesterday whether they had contributed. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that information was denied.

As to the hon. Gentleman's references to a dirty war in Ireland, I think that I had better ignore that part of his question.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if the text of the programme is as academic as was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), there is no reason why the BBC should not have divulged it on the limited and confidential basis requested? Does he further agree that those who have undertaken an oath of confidentiality and subsequently break it should, at that moment, have all emoluments ended? Should not that be a condition of their service? They should not be able to profit from this or any other Government.

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I entirely understand the need to preserve what might be described as the proper journalistic proprieties. I certainly do not believe that anything in the action taken by the Government yesterday could be construed as a breach of those proprieties or an attempt to seek to attain such a breach. I shall explain what was done by the Government yesterday. We read in some detail, from other journalists, that a programme was to take place that contained the names of considerable number of former and serving members of the security services. We read that there were "jitters at Broadcasting House" and so on — [HON. MEMBERS: "Really."]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Pathetic.

The Attorney-General: Oh, no. I think that Opposition Members must decide whether they are upholding and standing firm behind the integrity of journalism, or whether they are saying that nobody pays the slightest attention to anything said by journalists because as a class they are irresponsible. They must make up their minds on which stand they are taking. Supposing that, yesterday, we had been told the identities of those contributing to the programme and what they had said, it might have been —I know not—that we could have agreed to the whole programme.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will the Attorney-General confirm that the BBC was prepared to disclose the transcript to Mr. Justice Henry, who could then have applied the appropriate legal principles to that? Does he accept that the Government's stand on the duty and confidentiality of former security service servants would be much improved were it not characterised by a shrill authoritarianism against the media and selective leaking to trusties on the Right?

The Attorney-General: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I understand that at the hearing, counsel for the BBC offered to show the transcript to the judge, but he said that he did not wish at that stage to see it. At that stage, it would have been the view of the Crown that, in any event, there would have been insufficient time for it, let alone the judge, to form a view at the hearing. The matter would have had to be subjected to examination and consultation. Of course, there might well have been time,

had the request been granted when it was made earlier in the day. Unfortunately, it was not. The BBC has leave from the judge to go back on 24 hours notice to apply for the injunction to be discharged or for its scope to be narrowed.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, it all depends on what he means by that buzz word "authoritarianism". The Prime Minister is the Minister responsible for the security services of this state. She alone has that authority. If, by exerting that authority and protecting the confidentiality that is owed to the Crown, she is to be described as authoritarian, and her colleagues collectively with her, that is a label that I should be proud to wear.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is not the nature of the question another sign of a grubby little campaign by the sneaks and narks on the Opposition Benches to undermine national security—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter that the whole House is taking seriously. I ask the hon. Gentleman to try to keep the temperature down.

Mr. Marlow: I put it to my right hon. and learned Friend that there is a desire on the Benches opposite, or let us say a cavalier attitude to national security, where they feel that they might be able to vainly acquire a certain amount of party political benefit. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what discussions he has had with the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on the Front Bench opposite as to what his attitude would have been had he found himself in my right hon. and learned Friend's position?

The Attorney-General: I watched the performance of the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on "Newsnight" last night, when he took part in the programme in the company of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), and I listened to the right hon. and learned Gentleman again this morning. He was asked that question twice and he dodged it twice. I am afraid that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is prepared to wound, but afraid to strike.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the Attorney-General accept that Opposition Members are as concerned about matters of security as any Members on the Conservative Benches? We are equally concerned about the freedom of the press. Even with retrospect and hindsight, will he not admit that the Government have acted in a fashion that can only be described as high handed and clod-footed?

With regard to the point made by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), is it not a fact that the right hon. Gentleman's question about confidentiality and his concern for confidentiality referred to the contracts of those concerned and not about a facile injunction which attacks the freedom of the press? The Attorney-General skated over the question from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) with regard to the interpretation of the injunction. Downing street claimed last night that the injunction was narrow and had a narrow and limiting effect. Will the Attorney-General confirm or contradict that?

The Attorney-General: I do not interpret orders made by the court. The courts speak for themselves and their orders must be interpreted by those to whom they apply. In response to the hon. Gentleman's question whether I accept that his colleagues and he are patriotic and concerned about security, I am sure that they are concerned about security. I would certainly hope that right hon. Members on the Opposition Benches are so concerned. I cast no aspersions about that. I merely stress that those who must protect the security of this country have the duty to take all reasonable steps open to them. They asked for information which could determine the issue one way or the other, but were refused that information. I am afraid that there was no option but to take the steps taken yesterday. If that is high-handed, so be it. However, I do not believe that many people would regard it as such.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question, not a statement. It has gone on longer than I would normally allow for a private notice question. This is a Back-Bench day and many hon. Members want to take part in the debate. I am afraid that some of them may not now be called.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unfair on a Back-Bench day.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): There are only three of us left wishing to speak.

Mr. Speaker: I know that the hon. Gentleman has not been called, but I am not prepared to allow an extension of this Question Time.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is not an extension of Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, I will take Mr. Corbett.

Mr. Corbett: Will you please confirm, Mr. Speaker, that the exchanges that we have just had are still covered by parliamentary privilege and therefore may be freely reported by the BBC and other media in spite of the injunction that the Government have obtained?

Mr. Speaker: I have allowed the private notice question today and it is in the public domain as far as the House is concerned.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the past you have taken points of order from other hon. Members who have complained about their difficulty in obtaining information in ministerial answers and the evasions that have taken place. You quite properly said on those occasions that you had no power to compel a Minister to divulge information and that hon. Members should apply themselves to other means of obtaining and discovering that information. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that one of the means left to hon. Members on occasions such as this is to use the media in concert to smoke out information of that kind. With the deepest respect, I ask you to reflect, Mr. Speaker, on the position in which this form of gag places hon. Members of this House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is nothing to do with me. I am concerned with order in the Chamber. I say to the hon. Gentleman and all hon. Members that Back-Bench time is very short in this place. I am constantly concerned to

[Mr. Speaker]

ensure that Back Benchers have an opportunity to make their points in debate. That is what the House is about. I have allowed well over half an hour for this question. At an ordinary Question Time, that would be excessive.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you allow me to make an application under Standing Order No. 20 arising from the exchanges that we have had——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, not on a Friday.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the difficult balance which must be achieved, as you have liberally allowed an unusual 35 minutes for the private notice question. However, it is not only procedural matters which should be taken into account in future. You must take into account the nature of the material which the question brings out.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this occasion relates to freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the freedom of hon. Members to participate in the proceedings on those fundamental constitutional freedoms. In future judgments about time, I hope that you will bear that in mind, especially as hon. Members may not have been able to ask questions who may be able to bring matters into the debate which would otherwise not be aired.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know, as you are in charge of these proceedings, that there is a difference between a private notice question and a statement. It is significant, as I read the situation, that the Attorney-General who gagged the BBC had to be dragged squealing to the House because he did not make a statement, which would have attracted a wider variety of cross-questioning. He only came here as a result of the attempt of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) to table a private notice question. Here we are, in the interests of glasnost, with a pathetic Government with their 100-seat majority——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I am getting to my point.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman was not called again.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell the House that I received dozen of letters from hon. Members this week complaining bitterly that they were not called in debate. How can I possibly answer letters of that kind when hon. Members take up the time on completely different matters?

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have an absolute obligation, as the whole House accepts, to protect the business of the House and the interests of Back Benchers. It is unfair to the whole House.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I just wanted to finish.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman is regularly called and it is unfair for hon. Members to seek to take up other hon. Members' time.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman would be the first to complain, and has complained, about such abuses.

Mr. Skinner: You are here to protect Back Benchers. We are going down the road——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am not taking any more points of order on this matter.

Cyprus

Question again proposed.

11.35 am

Mr. Jim Spicer: I will attempt to reiterate the points that I was making before the private notice question. I had referred to the guilt of Labour Members who constituted the Government of the day in 1974.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Since the hon. Gentleman appears to be referring to guilt among Labour Members, is he claiming that in 1974 the Conservative party was pressing for intervention and was in favour of intervention?

Mr. Spicer: That was a matter for the Government. In the debates on Cyprus as I recollect them, there were many calls from Conservative Members for intervention. We had a duty to intervene, but that was a Government duty.

Mr. Anderson: What was the official policy of Her Majesty's Opposition in 1974 about intervention?

Mr. Spicer: I do not know. However, I know what my view was and the views of many of my hon. Friends. We pushed our view as hard as we could. I remember distinctly in July 1974 meeting Mr. Ecevit when he visited London. I remember what he said to me. He was in despair. He said, "We have no choice but to intervene. All this would be so easy if only your people would do their duty." They did not do that duty because they were craven.

No one knows what discussions took place in Cabinet, but it is clear that those of us who knew about the concerns of the Greek Cypriots at the takeover by Nicos Sampson certainly would have welcomed intervention. Within one hour we could have had a force in Nicosia and we could have seen the end of Nicos Sampson, the re-establishment of Archbishop Makarios in his rightful place as President, the reconvening of the conference and the re-establishment of the constitution — perhaps with a few more teeth added—which had not been observed during the 1960s.

The responsibility for the tragedy of Cyprus rests largely with Opposition Members who were in government in 1974. So we have to live with the reality of a divided Cyprus 14 years on from the events of 1974. Much worse, we have to live with a divided community. People such as Mr. Denktash and Mr. Clerides, from opposing communities, were educated together, came to London together and still talk to each other, but their grandchildren cannot talk to each other because for 20 years they have lived apart. It is part of the tragedy of Cyprus that hate and suspicion is deeply embedded in those children, and I do not know how that can be overcome.

The only way forward is through the acceptance of a federal structure for Cyprus; nothing else will suffice or meet the suspicions of the two communities. Other hon. Members have mentioned the result of the Turkish elections. I am sure that all hon. Members welcome the Government of Turkey being in the hands of Mr. Ozal, and that Mr. Papandreou, after the re-election of Mr. Ozal, said "We must come together and talk." In an atmosphere of calm, perhaps those two states and statesmen can put some pressure on Cyprus. The point has already been made that unless Greece and Turkey are prepared to bring that pressure, nothing can be done. The solution rests in their hands.

We have a special role, despite there being Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as all Cypriots hold to their links with our country. They do not want to be Greek or Turkish Cypriots; they welcome the fact that over the past 150 years Britain has had an input into Cyprus, and most of them would rather come to London than to Ankara or Athens for their education. We have a special role, quite apart from our role as a guarantor power, and we must continue to build on those links and to support the Secretary-General.

Beyond that, we must do whatever we can to build bridges between the two communities. I suggest one or two areas where we might do that. First and foremost, a time bomb is ticking away in Cyprus which could explode at any moment. I refer to the water supply. Many United Nations reports have been made on the water supply in Cyprus. We know that the water table is dropping rapidly. Many ambitious schemes have been suggested over the years, one of which involved piping water from mainland Turkey to Cyprus. It is high time that the plans were resurrected and looked at again, because the growth of tourism, especially in the south of the island, could cause the water in the pipeline to Nicosia to become saline. That would be dangerous, because the main aquifers in the north lie almost directly under the partition line between the Greek and Cypriot communities.

If the United Kingdom is to attempt to bring the two communities together, the British Council, with the support of the Government, should bring together young Turkish and Greek Cypriots for a fortnight at a time, for informal discussions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham referred to the re-opening of Nicosia airport. I raised the proposal during another debate on Cyprus some two or three years ago, when it was clear to me, and I think to most people, that although tremendous advantage would be gained for the Turkish Cypriots, the Greek Cypriots would not wish to open up the international airport, with dual access, because that would immediately increase the prosperity of the north. The Greek Cypriot Government were not anxious to do that.

The point has been made that re-opening the airport may result in a reduction in the Turkish armed forces in Cyprus. I have said many times, and to the Turkish Prime Minister and Mr. Denktash, that I cannot understand why the Turkish Government and Turkish Cypriots insist upon maintaining as many forces in Cyprus as they have now. It is clear that in 1963, when the Turkish community in Cyprus was under severe attack and threat, nothing happened; neither the Turkish forces nor the guarantor powers made any move. In 1967, again the Turkish Cypriots were under immediate threat, and again nothing happened. It is perhaps sad that something did not happen then, either with the guarantor powers jointly or with the Turkish army.

By 1974, those people who did not wish the state of Cyprus well were lulled into a false sense of security and believed that they could act with impunity, as Nicos Sampson did. We know that that can never happen again. If the Turkish armed forces were reduced to brigade strength, I could suggest a disposition of the brigade which would more than adequately cover the security of Turkish Cypriots, because everyone in Cyprus, not least the Government, knows that any move on the part of anyone would immediately bring about the re-intervention of Turkish forces and possibly even the occupation of the

[Mr. Spicer]

whole island. Nothing would do more to bring together the two communities than to open the airport, with dual access. That is something to which we should all look forward.

My speech was interrupted, and I am sorry that it has been rather disjointed. I join all hon. Members who have spoken and will speak in saying that we cannot stand by and see the people of the marvellous island of Cyprus continuing to live in a state of tension. The tension not only exists between the two communities, but has a knock-on effect on relations between Greece and Turkey and on the NATO Alliance, so it behoves us to do all we can to find a solution and help both communities.

11.50 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): This is a very interesting debate. I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on introducing it and I pay the warmest tribute to hon. Members on both sides of the House who are genuinely seeking an honourable settlement for Cyprus.

We are discussing events that are taking place in a country that is part of the Commonwealth. Hon. Members who have an interest in other countries may believe that they have a right to bring events in those countries to the notice of the House, but we are referring to events in a country that is an honourable and a loyal member of the Commonwealth. I hope that one day Cyprus will be united and that both Greek and Turkish Cypriots will be able to live and work together harmoniously in what is without doubt one of the most beautiful islands in the world. When an honourable settlement is reached, it will also become one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

We have heard a great deal about what happened between 1960 and 1974. I do not say that hon. Members should not refer to that, because it influenced events subsequent to 1974. However, I shall concentrate on what happened after 1974. Following the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish army 13 years ago, the position in Cyprus grew worse year by year, and the suffering that was caused by the invasion continues. There is the tragedy of the 1,600 Greek Cypriot men and women who disappeared. Despite repeated attempts, and documentation that contains the names, the professions and the villages of those people, there has been no satisfactory explanation of what happened to them. Thousands of people were forced from their homes in the occupied area of northern Cyprus. They lost their homes, their land and their possessions. We have never been able to find out what happened to the property of those people. The one desire, however, of both the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities in this country is to return to Cyprus.

Many of us have looked in recent years for evidence that Mr. Denktash wants an honourable settlement in Cyprus, but we continue to look for that evidence. The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) referred to the large number of Turkish troops in Cyprus. During the lifetime of the last Parliament, I was a member of a delegation that went to see the Foreign Secretary who, to his credit, has said both in public and in private that the British Government believe that a substantial reduction in the number of Turkish troops in the occupied part of Cyprus is long overdue.

Thousands of Turkish men and women from the Turkish mainland have been brought into northern Cyprus. They have no links with the island. Even the opposition parties in northern Cyprus are highly critical of Mr Denktash's actions in bringing those people into northern Cyprus. In an article headed "Turkish Cypriots fearful of Turkish settlers", it is said that representatives of three Turkish Cypriot political parties — the Republican Turkish party, the Communal Liberation party and the Elan People's party — have united to condemn the actions of Mr. Denktash in bringing people from mainland Turkey to settle in the north of Cyprus. The article says:

> "The fact that the Turkish Cypriots are becoming a minority in the north of Cyprus does not bother Mr. Denktash. On the contrary he is pleased. It makes him happy because as the number of the settlers increases, Denktash's percentage of vote increases."

That is a source of great concern to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. However, Mr. Denktash does nothing about that. He is encouraging more and more people from mainland Turkey to come as quickly as possible into the occupied area. There is no evidence of good will. If anything, it has made the prospects of a settlement even more difficult.

Many of us hoped that the basis for a settlement would be reached during the intercommunal talks that have taken place since 1974. Sadly, a settlement was not reached. Since the invasion in 1974, United Nations resolutions 353, 541 and 550 have called for a settlement in Cyprus. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has made it quite clear that Mr. Denktash must be prepared to do certain things, if there is to be a prospect of a settlement in Cyprus. A meaningful withdrawal of Turkish troops and the ending of the settlement of mainland Turks in Northern Cyprus are high on the list. We have heard in the debate that, while Mr. Denktash is prepared to accept certain United Nations proposals, the Greek Cypriots are not prepared to accept other United Nations proposals. The United Nations resolutions set out clearly what the Secretary-General believes could form the basis of a settlement, if certain things happened. Tragically, they have not happened.

I am a great believer in the United Nations, but as one of the guarantor powers in Cyprus, we shall have to consider what we must do if the discussions taking place under the auspices of the United Nations are not successful. New initiatives will have to be proposed. This may not be the appropriate time to do that, but I pay the warmest tribute to the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for what he said in his recent Adjournment debate on Cyprus — that although the United Kingdom will do all that it can to support the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the time will come when we shall have to consider other initiatives. It would be interesting if the Minister commented on current policy. It is easy for the Government to say, "Of course we support the initiatives of the Secretary-General," but, sadly, over the years we have seen that, whatever initiatives he tries, they are unsuccessful. We may have to consider other avenues for support.

Criticism is made of the attitude of Greek Cypriots. I shall say here what I say when speaking at functions organised by Greek Cypriots — that the Greek Cypriot

community and the Government of Cyprus have made far too many concessions already. The time for making further concessions has long since gone.

We must always remember that Cyprus was invaded. It is still being invaded by a foreign army in the area that is occupied by Turkish troops. Some 30 per cent. of the island is occupied. There are thousands of foreigners on the island; they may be Turkish citizens, but they are foreigners to the island of Cyprus.

We have had the declaration of UDI by Mr. Denktash, but that is not evidence of good will. Despite the history, if he wants to achieve a settlement for Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots, he will have to demonstrate much more good will.

I must tell the Minister that it is to the credit of the Government that they have refused to recognise the illegal action of independence by Mr. Denktash, but it is strange that they condemn his actions yet do everything they can to keep him in power by means of the unlimited trade that is allowed with the occupied area. It trades with Europe and this country. If we are saying that Mr. Denktash is wrong and that we should not support him, we should not therefore give him support by allowing his economy to continue, and certainly not to prosper. No hon. Member has said, sadly, that there is prosperity in the occupied area; the position is quite the reverse. We have a right to condemn UDI, but equally we must take action to stop trade between Europe and the occupied area until there is a greater willingness on the part of Mr. Denktash and his colleagues to enter into meaningful discussion to end the tragedy of Cyprus.

We are entitled to ask what the United States of America is doing. Many believe that the United States, with its close involvement with mainland Turkey, does and could have an influence. President Reagan repeatedly says how his Administration champions the rights of people to their freedom and independence, which we applaud, but where is the evidence that he is following that principle to ensure the freedom and rights of the people of Cyprus? It would be interesting if the Minister were to say whether he is aware of any involvement of the United States in the problem of Cyprus.

Comment has been made about the number of Turkish troops. People who are sympathetic to and campaign for the Greek Cypriot community are often accused of exaggerating this issue. Therefore, I shall quote a comment recently made in the Congress of the United States by a United States Assistant Secretary of State, Rozanne Ridgeway, who was asked about the current levels of Turkish troops in Cyprus. She said:

"The mainland Turkish forces on Cyprus continue to be high, ranging from 22,000 to 30,000."

That statement was made by an official of the Unted States Administration, so one can accept that those figures are correct. I agree with the hon. Member for Dorset, West in his criticism of the levels of Turkish troops on the island.

I am sure that every hon. Member who has taken part in the debate wants a settlement to the Cyprus problem. I want a settlement in which the rights of the people are fully protected and guaranteed. I am not, and never have been, campaigning solely for the Greek Cypriot community. To do so would be sheer folly, given the rights of the minority community on the island. I want a settlement that is honourable to both sides. I believe that in the future there will be a Government of Cyprus made up of Greek and Turkish men and women, who will share the responsibility of a united Cyprus. Any attempt to divide Cyprus, to allow the status quo to continue, to accept that we can do nothing about it, would be the tragedy of this century. We have seen, in countries that are divided, the long-term effects of such division on their people.

We have heard about the methods by which we could progress—through the use of airports and the potential development of water; mention was made of the role of the British Council. They are all commendable suggestions, but I must throw two spanners in that line of thinking. Attempts are repeatedly made in Cyprus to allow Greek and Turkish Cypriots of all ages and of various professions to come together to talk about how they see the development of their country. However, Mr. Denktash will not allow Turkish Cypriots to go into the Greek Cypriot area to discuss the future of Cyprus. They often come to this country and to the House to discuss the future of their country, because Mr. Denktash does not allow them to do it in their own country. The British Council may have a role to play, but the men and women of Cyprus have a real role to play when they meet to discuss the problems of Cyprus.

Reference was made earlier to Famagusta. What will happen to it? This has been an issue over the years, and had Mr. Denktash been willing to say, "There are differences that may take a long time to resolve, but I am prepared to show good will," Famagusta would have been high on the list. Hon. Members have mentioned issues that could be developed — the airports, the potential development of water and the British Council—and I support all of them, but until other issues are decided, little progress will be made.

The hon. Member for Streatham made a valid comment on the recent Turkish elections. It was pleasing to read in a report in *The Times* that the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Papandreou, had sent a letter of congratulation to the re-elected Turkish Prime Minister. I hope that that is genuine evidence of the willingness of the Greek Government to meet the Turkish Government and to discuss the obvious problems that they have. If that is evidence of good will, it is something we should do all in our power to encourage.

I find it unbelievable that the people who were forced to leave their homes, lands and possessions have never been allowed to go back to see what condition their properties are in. They are not allowed to see whether they are being farmed or looked after or whether their homes are being occupied. They may feel bitter, but it would at least give them some comfort to know that their lands are being looked after. Sadly, they are never given that opportunity.

Three basic issues divide Cyprus and will continue to divide it: troop withdrawal, free movement of people and stopping settlers from mainland Turkey. Until something is done about those issues, there will be no settlement. No matter what we do in this Parliament or what is done anywhere in the world in an effort to bring about a settlement, there will be no settlement. I am sure that every hon. Member who speaks in the debate wants a settlement, but we are now entitled to evidence of good will by Mr. Denktash and his colleagues. He is aware of the basic issues that concern the Greek Cypriots, and he should respond. If he does so, we can look to an honourable and lasting settlement for Cyprus.

12.12 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on his good fortune in topping the ballot for a motion after 17 years. I can tell him that I have been waiting for 21 years and have not attained his good fortune. I also congratulate him on selecting this subject for debate. It is a subject that has been ignored by the House over the past 13 years. There is a handful of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have shown an interest in the subject and their views cross the party divide.

It is regrettable that we in this House have not paid more attention to the fact that a member of the British Commonwealth has remained, in part, under occupation by foreign troops for 13 years. That is totally unacceptable and we should be straining to achieve a solution. If there is not a legal obligation, there is certainly a moral obligation on the part of the British Government under the treaty of guarantee, which I feel successive Governments have not honoured to the extent that they should.

We have to bear in mind that there are some 200,000 British subjects of Cypriot origin living in the United Kingdom for whom this is an urgent and pressing problem. As Members of Parliament we have a duty to reflect their views in the House. I immediately declare an interest as I have a substantial Cypriot population within my constituency, both Greek and Turkish. They are able to live in harmony with one another. Therefore, one cannot accept that Turkish and Greek Cypriots could not live together in harmony in their own land were it not for external political interference.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I agree with everything, that the hon. Gentleman has said. Will he also accept that before the invasion in 1974 there were many villages in Cyprus where Greeks and Turks were living closely and harmoniously?

Sir Hugh Rossi: That is perfectly true. However, it is dangerous to dwell too much on the past, because there are rights and wrongs on both sides. If one talks to Mr. Denktash, one will hear a great deal from him about what happened in 1963 and 1964, when there was a determined move by some Greek Cypriots to bring about enosis and drive the Turkish Cypriots away. Those claims are equalled and paralleled, if not exceeded, by complaints we have had since 1974 about the way in which many Greek Cypriots were treated by Turkish occupying troops in the early days and the way in which that unhappy island has remained divided and so many people have been deprived of their homes and basic human rights.

Reference was made to the 1975 Select Committee report. I am the only hon. Member in the Chamber who served on that Select Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) was right when he said that the view of the Committee—it was an all-party Committee—was that the Government of the day failed in their obligations under the treaty of guarantee. The irony is that, if that Government had had a little backbone and joined Mr. Ecevit in stopping the coup d'etat of Nicos Sampson in that attempt at enosis, the Labour Government would have had the satisfaction of having brought down a Greek junta, because that is what happened subsequently. They denied themselves that opportunity, when they had the wherewithal in the sovereign bases and Malta to be able to deal with the situation effectively. As has been said, there was an election in the offing and Messrs. Callaghan and Wilson were not anxious to become involved in Cyprus.

The hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Anderson), the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, is not correct in saying that the Conservative party did not raise the matter at the time or at the first opportunity. I happened to be a Front Bench spokesman for the Opposition in those days and I raised the matter at the first opportunity during the reply to the Gracious Speech. I was given the brush-off by Mr. Callaghan.

Mr. Anderson: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. My point was simply whether the then Opposition made a clear declaration that they supported intervention by the British Government.

Sir Hugh Rossi: They were not in a position to do so, because of the timing. The hon. Gentleman knows that it occurred in the middle of a parliamentary recess. However, as soon as we returned, we raised the matter in the way I have described.

Mr. Anderson: Surely that is not good enough. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and he knows that parliamentarians, even in recess, have ample opportunity to make statements on matters of importance if they so choose. If the then Opposition chose not to make that sort of declaration, we can draw our own conclusions.

Sir Hugh Rossi: We can draw the firm conclusion—the hon. Gentleman is trying to get his hon. Friends off this hook—that the Government then in power, with all the means at their disposal, chose to do absolutely nothing. The hon. Gentleman cannot blame that inaction on the Opposition of the day. That was the view taken by the all-party Committee of which a former Cabinet Minister in a previous Labour Government happened to be Chairman. However, although the matter has been raised, I do not think that there is much to be gained by raking over old political embers. I intend to address my remarks to the present state of affairs.

I have been critical, and I shall continue to be critical, of my own Government. I believe that they could do more. They are equally bound by the obligations under the treaty of guarantee, and they are not doing all that they could be doing. In order not to be too unfair to the Government, I say at once that they took immediate and positive action at the time of the declaration of UDI by Mr. Denktash. The British Government responded immediately that the act was illegal and that the regime could not be recognised. Moreover, the representatives of the British Government did all that they could in the United Nations to marshal world opinion and to bring about a universal condemnation of that illegal declaration.

Having said that, I do not think that the Government —whatever they may be doing diplomatically— have spoken up publicly enough about the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus and the growing number of settlers from Anatolia, to which several hon. Members have referred. Between 30,000 and 35,000 Turkish troops are stationed in a part of the British Commonwealth. They arrived there as an act of war, by way of invasion and uninvited. The British Government should not accept that state of affairs. Such acceptance is certainly not in line with the Falklands

spirit with which this Government have come to be associated. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to be more forthright in their attitude to this unhappy situation.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said so far, and he has touched on a good point. Does he accept that in recent months and years not only has the Turkish garrison in the north been expanded but it has been re-equipped with new NATO tanks? We now have 300 modern tanks sitting in a very small land space in the north of Cyprus. That enhancement of force is totally unwarranted and has not been specifically condemned by the British Government as it should have been.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

The other matter on which the British Government could and should say more—certainly in public—relates to the growing number of settlers arriving in the north of the island from the mainland. There are differing figures, which range from 30,000 to 60,000. The problem that such settlers create is twofold. First, with the passage of time, they will come naturally to regard Cyprus as their own home. The human problem will become more and more difficult to solve if they have to be asked to leave the land and homes that they occupy, which belong not to them but to others who have been denied access to them.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Who is going to ask them to leave, and why?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I should have thought that, first, we should discourage any more settlers.

Mr. Holt: That is a different matter.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The number of settlers continues to grow and our Government have not been seen to be doing anything to protest against this development, which has accelerated in recent years. It will become very difficult to deal with those who have become established and say to them, "You must leave the house and the land that you occupy because it is not yours; it belongs to somebody else." One simply cannot understand the motives of Mr. Denktash in giving away title deeds to property that is already owned by others, who are denied the right to enjoy land that their families may have worked for generations.

By allowing the situation to continue, we are creating a human problem. We are allowing land to be given away to others, who, in time, will insist on remaining there. The original owners will say, "This land has belonged to my family for 100 or 200 years. Why should it be stolen from me by political action?" The problem will be compounded when the children of the settlers, who have been born in Cyprus, say, "I am a Cypriot." It will then be impossible —I agree with my hon. Friend—to say to those people, "You must go back to Turkey." They will say, "We do not know Turkey. We were born here. We are Cypriots." That is why I urge that quick action should be taken to discourage the process.

The human problem created by the process must be dealt with as sensitively as possible. Perhaps it will be necessary to set up a compensation fund or to exchange land that previously belonged to Turks in the south, which is now being used by Greek Cypriots, for land in the north. Basic human rights have to be honoured and respected. We must start from the premise that people who have lost their land or had it stolen from them should have the first claim to its restoration, to alternative land to replace it or to monetary compensation. That cannot be pushed under the carpet.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Does my hon. Friend know whether Cypriot law is similar to British law, in that occupation of land for 12 years or more gives squatters' rights? If the land in the south is occupied by Greek Cypriots and land in the north by Turkish Cypriots for perhaps more than 12 years, under the normal British system they would have good title to that land.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I should not like to pronounce upon the niceties of Cypriot law. I find it difficult enough as a practising lawyer to deal with all the niceties of English law. I am not sure whether, if a person has been kept off his land by physical force, by a squatter, the prescriptive right to which my hon. Friend referred would run in the way suggested. As for the land previously in Turkish ownership, I understand that the occupiers are required by Greek Cypriot law to pay a rent, which is deposited in an account and available to be paid to the rightful owners as and when they are able to reclaim their land. One might have thought that there would be a reciprocal arrangement in the north but, unhappily, it does not exist. Instead Mr. Denktash has issued title deeds to the people who have come from Turkey and led them to believe that they are the legal owners of that property.

The human problems of one individual dealing with another — not the problems on which politicians pontificate or with which international Governments deal — are becoming more difficult because of the way in which the situation has been allowed to drift. Little has been done to stop the influx from the mainland of Turkey. There is no justification for it—except, I understand, to bolster the political power and influence of Mr. Denktash. I understand that he derives his popular support from it.

Statements which issue from northern Cyprus seem to show that the Turkish Cypriots are extremely worried and unhappy about the influx and regard themselves as third-class citizens. That is another aspect of the tragedy. The opposition's problems in the north are difficult, if one is able to believe the information coming from the area. Democracy in the sense in which we understand it does not apply there. It is very much a one-man state in the north, bolstered by Turkish arms and guns. The House and the Government must pay attention to that matter.

One can understand the history of this unhappy island in recent years, with two communities, one in fear of the other. The Turkish minority is afraid lest there once again be a united island on a one-man, one-vote basis, making them second-class citizens. They complain that that is what happened before 1974. Whether that is right or wrong is another matter, but it is what they say and believe.

The Greek Cypriots are afraid that, because of its geography, Turkey can at any moment annex the whole island and that that is the reason for the presence of Turkish troops in such large numbers. Those fears must be overcome. It can only happen through the international community, led by Britain — because of our responsibilities to a Commonwealth country and former colony —ensuring that there are guarantees and by the creation of organs of state that guarantee the rights of the minority in the island. That is a sine qua non. Basic human rights

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

of the kind to which I referred must be protected by the international community, supported by international guarantees.

Resolving the fears that the communities have of one another is more difficult. Around the world, we can see situations in which communities live together, but in which one is in fear of the other. We are in a position to help by asserting greater moral influence than we have so far.

Hon. Members have referred to the recent election in Turkey and the success of Mr. Ozal, and to the immediate reaction that that has produced in Athens by way of statements made by Mr. Papandreou. In that result, and in Mr. Papandreou's reaction, we can see the beginnings of a desire by the two main contenders to reach an early agreement, on sensible terms, about the future of Cyprus. We must do whatever we can to encourage that new feeling and atmosphere in every way we possibly can.

There is one other way in which we could give a meaningful impetus to the discussions that are taking place. Turkey is a supplicant for entry into the European Economic Community. It should be made quite clear that, as long as its troops occupy the sovereign territory of another state, it is acting in such a fundamental breach of the attitudes of Community members that it would be hard to accept it as a member. We should insist on that. I advise my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that I hope that the Government will be more forthcoming and positive about this matter.

I noted with interest that the recent report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs made a recommendation along those lines, but the Government's response was ambivalent. One can understand the desire to be diplomatic rather than positive when dealing with a member state of NATO. Nevertheless, when matters of principle are involved of the type that we have been discussing this morning, we have every right to say to a supplicant member of the Community, "Certain standards must be observed if you wish to become a member." There is absolutely nothing wrong in saying that. Because of our position and our history in this situation, we have not only a right but a duty to say so.

A great deal more could be said about the unhappy situation in Cyprus. Various proposals have been made involving matters of detail, ranging from an international airport to the release of Famagusta. In fairness, I should correct one observation by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) about Famagusta. He suggested that Mr. Denktash should put that on offer. I believe that he has done so in the past but that, unhappily, it was rejected. Serious mistakes have been made by both sides in the handling of the proposals that have been made by one side to the other, or by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the past few years. One does not wish to attach greater blame to either Mr. Denktash or Mr. Kyprianou for the failure of those talks, or to the attempts of the Secretary-General but, nevertheless, there have been shortcomings on both sides.

I hope that, in the new atmosphere that prevails between Greece and Turkey, some rethinking will take place both to the north and south of the green line which divides Cyprus. I am sure that all hon. Members will wish to see the quick restoration of a united, independent sovereign state on that delightful island, where the individuals living there have their basic human rights fully protected and their land and homes restored to them as quickly as possible.

12.40 pm

Mr Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on enabling us to have this debate and particularly on the terms in which he opened it. There has been a broad consensus in the debate, except for the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer), and it is important that we reach a consensus on this issue, if possible. The pity is that we shall be denied the opportunity of hearing the views of the Liberal party or any of the three bits that make up the SDP. Their Benches are empty.

The re-election of the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Ozal, is extremely important for Cyprus. Both before and after his election he made it clear that the principal aims of his Government would be to secure entry into the EC and to improve relations with Greece. In all fairness to someone in his position in Turkey, we must congratulate him on his bravery and honesty in putting those two aims so firmly and publicly on the agenda.

That new spirit was immediately picked up by Mr. Andreas Papandreou, the Greek Prime Minister who, as *The Times* reported,

"in an unusually warm message of congratulations and good wishes to Mr. Ozal . . . expressed his conviction that 'our personal contacts will continue for the benefit of relations between our two countries as well as peace in the region'."

That statement and the response of the Turkish Prime Minister on his re-election give grounds for greater hope than there has been for a long time that there is now a better possibility of Cyprus resolving its agonies and problems.

It is a truism to say that no one stands to benefit more from improved relations between Greece and Turkey than the people of Cyprus. Like other hon. Members who have spoken, when I say "the people of Cyprus" it is no slip of the tongue; I mean the people of Cyprus, whether from the Turkish Cypriot community or the Greek Cypriot community.

Before those exchanges between the Turkish and Greek Prime Ministers, I believed that time was running out for Cyprus. for 13 years since the brutal invasion by Turkey this problem has festered, and there comes a point when people lose interest because a more urgent matter comes along and takes priority in the headlines of the world's media. I was wrong, because with those exchanges it is possible that we have reached one of those rare moments in history when, with an act of boldness, good will and openness, it is possible for the two Prime Ministers to jump over the barricades and debris of history which have helped to bedevil a solution to the problems of Cyprus.

It would be quite right for us to take absolutely at face value the Turkish Prime Minister's words about his wish to improve relations with Greece and to give him every good wish for the achievement of that objective. It may or may not help, but perhaps it is worth considering asking the United Nations Secretary-General to ask the Turkish Prime Minister quietly to expand on what he proposes to do to try to improve those relations, and to offer any assistance that the Secretary-Gereral or the Greek Prime Minister may feel that they need. In a sense I hope that that will not be necessary, because the best way for people

to resolve problems that are between them is to have a mutual willingness to get over those problems and to push aside the things that stand in the way.

Better relations between Greece and Turkey are in everyone's interest for reasons other than Cyprus, and if progress can be made on achieving a solution, for example to the problems in the Aegean between the two countries, there is a chance of opening the door to progress in solving the problems of Cyprus. Given good will and boldness, it is possible to arrive at a solution that again guarantees the territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus. However, those taking part in the discussions must have a better sense of what tomorrow could bring rather than a detailed minuscule knowledge of what happened yesterday and in the days before it.

A solution will come only if the leaders of the two main communities in Cyprus look ahead rather than backwards. History should not be allowed to get in the way of a settlement that respects the interests of all Cypriots on the island and the island's integrity. Most Turkish Cypriots born on Cyprus—I do not include settlers—know from their own experience, as in this country, that it is possible for them to live in peace with their Greek Cypriot neighbours. That has happened more often than not. They recognise that the sooner the distinctions between the two communities can be put to one side the better. Of course everyone must respect cultural differences, but that is not the most important point about the exercise. The most important point must be the integrity and independence of the island of Cyprus, in the interests of all who live on it.

It does not help this process when in the north of the island, seemingly at the diktat of Mr. Denktash, Mr. Ozker Ozgur, the leader of the official Opposition party, the Republican Turkish party, is at this moment threatened with trial for allegedly libelling Mr. Denktash in an article written in December 1985. I understand that any day now a judicial court is to decide whether to strip Mr. Ozgur of his parliamentary immunity so that proceedings may be taken against him. That does not inspire confidence either in the House or in people living in the republic of Cyprus about what is going on in the north of the island or about the true intentions of Mr. Denktash. It does nothing to reassure anyone of the claim by Mr. Denktash to democratic commitment.

I know that Turkey and its military rulers have had little experience of democracy lately, but now that Mr. Ozal has taken that country down a new and more democratic path that we welcome, we shall expect that to be extended to the illegally occupied northern part of Cyprus. In recent days there has been a test of the strength of democracy in Turkey and its result has not set a very good example. Two committed Marxists, Haydar Kutlu and Nihat Sargin, expelled from Turkey since 1980, flew back from West Germany into Ankara and were immediately arrested for questioning. On 19 November, the European Parliament called for the release of the two leaders and we should support that call.

It must be understood in Turkey, as in any other democracy, that democracy must include democratic rights within the law for those whose opinions are unpopular or disliked by the majority of the country's citizens. That must be an essential ingredient of a democracy. We have a right to demand that the Turkish Prime Minister and others respect that principle.

Those whose hands were stained with the blood of the Turkish invasion in 1974 have now left the political scene, which gives me reason to hope that a solution to the problems of Cyprus will be achieved. Those who were actively involved in 1974 are no longer having to save face or be seen not to lose face. They are out of the way now. They are on the sidelines, and in their place is a new generation of leadership in Turkey. This gives me hope that a fresh start can be made.

When the Minister responds to the debate, I hope that he will explain as best as he is able what the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office meant when she replied to the Adjournment debate on 23 October. The right hon. Lady said that the Government did not believe that an international conference would help at that moment and added:

"We have contingency plans to cover the fact that, sadly, it might fail."

She then said:

"I hope that we will not need to put them into action and I am sure that my hon. Friends will understand that these contingency plans need to remain confidential."—[*Official Report*, 23 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 112.]

I do not have a clue what the Minister of State was referring when she made those remarks.

I accept that there may be good reason for keeping contingency plans under the counter, but if there is, I cannot think why the right hon. Lady mentioned them. I am not attacking the right hon. Lady, but her statement was bound to send wrong signals to any one of the parties involved in trying to reach a solution to the Cyprus problem, if not to every one.

For example, it could appear to Mr. Denktash that there is no need for him to do much about trying to reach an agreement with President Kyprianou because the Brits have something up their sleeves. He might take a view that he will get more if he holds back. Similarly, that view might be taken in Ankara. President Kyprianou might think, "Why should I make more concessions to try to get rid of the Turkish troops and establish the territorial integrity of the island? I might be giving more away than necessary because the Brits have a little parcel that they might be able to flog quietly to the Turks."

I hope that the Minister will be able to dispel any fears that the so-called contingency plans are ready and waiting. If that is understood to be the position, pressure will be taken off the leaders of Greece and Turkey to try to facilitate a solution to the problems of poor, bleeding Cyprus.

It would be right for us all, whatever views we take on the detail of the argument over Cyprus, to wish the Greek Prime Minister and the Turkish Prime Minister all success in the contacts that they are making. We do not expect these contacts to be public and to provide instant overnight headlines, but, we have a right to expect—the people of Cyprus have a right to demand—that the two prime Ministers will continue talking and improve relations until they can deliver a solution to the problem of Cyprus that enables it once again to live as one people on one beautiful island with respect for both communities.

12.55 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) has asked me to apologise to the House for his absence. As a member of the Friends of Cyprus organisation, he would have liked to be here. However, he had to attend a family funeral.

I join those of my colleagues who congratulated our hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on

[Mr. John Marshall]

his good fortune in the ballot and on his wisdom in choosing this subject for debate this morning. Its timing could not be more fortunate, because there has just been a Turkish general election, there is shortly to be a presidential election in Cyprus and it is possible that the Greek elections will take place in 1988 rather than in 1989.

There is a danger that, 13 years after the 1974 invasion, Cyprus has been put on the back burner of foreign affairs. There are strong reasons why that should not happen. Cyprus has a strategic importance to the United Kingdom, which is emphasised by the presence of the sovereign bases there. The importance of Cyprus to our European alliance is clear, and anything that divides Greece from Turkey provides hope for our enemies and does nothing for the alliance.

The real importance of the debate goes much wider than matters of strategy, defence and real politik—it is a humanitarian subject. Whenever I have visited Cyprus, I have been impressed by the large number of people who have been adversely affected by the developments after the 1974 invasion. If we visit Nicosia and wander through the streets, we will suddenly come across sandbags that effectively divide one part of Cyprus from the other, and we then realise how artificial is the division between those two parts of the island.

Of course, there is the further fact that a large number of people have been deprived of their homes, having been driven out in 1974 from either northern or southern Cyprus. They live not in their historic homes, but in the temporary abodes where they have been since 1974. They had to leave homes in villages where their families had lived for generations, and where they had inherited their homes from their parents and their grandparents before them. I remember meeting someone from northern Cyprus who said, "Every day I can see my home, but I cannot live in it." That really underlines the tragedy of Cyprus. More than 100,000 people currently do not reside in their family homes.

It is, of course, much worse for the Greek Cypriots, who know or fear that their family homes are being occupied not even by fellow Cypriots, but by Turkish settlers. It would be as though our very own Bexley and Sidcup was occupied not by other English people but by Frenchmen. I am sure that even my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) would object to that.

One of the real tragedies for the Cypriots is illustrated in Varosha. In 1973, it was very much the centrepiece of the tourist industry in Cyprus. Today, I am told that the hotels stand empty, rat-infested and crumbling. They are a monument to the failure of the world to persuade Turkey to disgorge the fruits of military victory.

A further tragedy was mentioned by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George)—that 1,600 families still do not know what happened to their loved ones in 1974. They do not know what happened to their fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters—something that is quite intolerable in a civilised world.

The resilience of Cyprus is shown in its economy. In 1973, 264,000 tourists visited the whole of Cyprus. It is estimated that 1 million tourists will visit Cyprus in 1987 and they will visit the Greek sector rather than northern Cyprus. There has been a 25 per cent. per annum compound growth in tourism in Cyprus but only about 10,000 tourists from the European Economic Community will visit northern Cyprus. That emphasises the great prosperity of the Greek sector and the fact that the northern sector has become a peasent economy with very low incomes.

Clearly, the status quo is unacceptable. When people suggest that a bizonal federation is the answer to the Cypriot problem, they fail to emphasise that that would mean that many tens of thousands of people would be unable to live in their own homes. That is why the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs was very wise to suggest a system of cantons in Cyprus with Greek and Turkish communities living apart. At least many more people would live in their own homes than is currently the case.

The European Community has a positive role to play in the Cypriot problem. I remember meeting Cypriot politicians in the late 1970s. They asked when they could achieve customs union with the European Economic Community. I am pleased that a protocol was signed in October this year which will lead over the next 15 years to full customs union between the Community and Cyprus.

Reference has been made in the debate to Turkey's application to join the European Community. Like everyone else, I welcome the fact that the recent elections were generally considered to be democratic. Indeed, nine members of the European Parliament formed a delegation to watch the elections and they agreed unanimously that the elections were fully democratic.

Although we have seen democratic elections in Turkey, we must recognise that Turkey is providing the wherewithal for the Denktash regime to continue. Given the fact that there is an association agreement between Cyprus and the EEC, and given the importance that the Community attaches to human rights, it would be wrong for Turkey to be allowed to become a member of the European Community so long as it is pursuing its present policies in respect of Cyprus.

There must be a danger, unless there is some early movement in Cyprus, that partition will become institutionalised. The longer we await a settlement, the more difficult it will be to return to normality and trust between the two communities. There has been much discussion about the various constitutional proposals from time to time. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has made a series of very important initiatives. Unfortunately, at no time have both sides agreed to a particular set of proposals.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marshall: I am afraid I cannot give way. I have quite a lot still to say and I know that other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Any movement towards improving the position in Cyprus relies upon a series of small steps one after the other rather than a major constitutional initiative. If there were a series of bridge-building exercises between the two communities, confidence might return to that beautiful island. We should not expect the answers to come from a series of high-flown constitutional initiatives. Clearly, the first two concessions from the Turkish community must be in regard to missing persons and Varosha. It is nonsense for that part of the island to be unoccupied. Concession in that regard could be a highly productive move in respect of tourism and building confidence between the two

communities. The Greek community ought to make concessions to try to reduce the disparity in income between the two parts of the island, because the disparity is so vast that everyone who goes to Cyprus is struck by its size. Other hon. Members have referred to the fact that in the United Kingdom Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live together in peace and prosperity.

Mr. Holt: Under British rule?

Mr. Marshall: I hope my hon. Friend is not suggesting that we go back to the situation that prevailed before 1960.

Mr. Holt: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will tell us what he means by "a return to normality". Does he mean a return to British rule during the invasion or the period after the invasion? What is normal in this intransigent situation?

Mr. Marshall: We would like the normality which prevails in the United Kingdom, where Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live together in peace and harmony. That surely must be the prayer of all of us, including my hon. Friend who seems to be very good at making sedentary observations. That must be the prayer of the whole House.

1.5 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on his feeling and knowledge about the tragedy of Cyprus. I certainly concur with his view that the problem would be best addressed by confidence-building measures and by small steps, rather than by expecting a big bang, which would be unlikely to occur, knowing as we do the depth of intercommunal suspicion, the geostrategic problems of the island and the long-standing problems between Greece and Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean.

The hon. Member, like all preceding speakers, drew on a reservoir of experience of the island. All hon. Members have striven for consensus, although some clearly lean to one or other side of the communal divide. It is my pleasure also to congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on his selection of the subject, although I was concerned at his statement that it had been his intention to choose as his subject the poll tax, but that he had been mightily leaned upon by the Whips, who indicated to him that dire things would happen were he to continue with that course. I am most concerned that the Government are seeking to use a Friday, which has traditionally been a private Members' day, for their own ends. Is this another example of the way in which this authoritarian Government are seeking to dominate the procedures of the House?

Mr. Shelton: The hon. Member is talking nonsense. He does not always talk nonsense, but he was talking nonsense then. If he looks at *Hansard*, he will see that I said that the Whips suggested to me most courteously—that was the phrase I used — that there may be a Division on the poll tax, because the Labour party might be sufficiently misguided as to put down an amendment, so we might have had to have a vote. Purely for my own welfare in the Smoking Room of the House of Commons over the next few months, I did not wish to call in my colleagues on a Friday afternoon to vote on an amendment. I was certainly not leaned on; there was no authoritarianism at all. The hon. Member is talking absolute nonsense.

Mr. Anderson: I accept that the hon. Member was spoken to with total courtesy, but he cannot re-run the proceedings of the House and claim that the Whips did not intervene in a mafia-style operation with an offer he could not refuse, even had he wanted to. Hence it is to our benefit that we have a debate on Cyprus, moved in a felicitous way by the hon. Member. He has provided us with an opportunity to consider what is happening in Cyprus.

The wording of the motion is acceptable to the Opposition. Therefore, we hope that the House as a whole will be able to send a clear signal to all the parties concerned. The Labour party has set out its position from time to time in the clearest of terms. For example, in 1983 we said:

> "We support genuine guarantees for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus, and the pursuit of intercommunal discussions sponsored by the UN for as long as both communities are committed to those talks."

The then spokesman for the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), said at that time to the Friends of Cyprus:

> "Labour believes in a free, united, independent Cyprus —with no occupying foreign troops. We want to see all the Cypriot people living in one nation under the government of their choice, with a guarantee for all Cypriots of peace and protection for human rights. We want all Cypriot refugees to be able to return to their homes."

After UDI and the referendum, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen have been ready to set out their position, which is based on principle.

Following the proximity talks in 1984, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that the prospects for a settlement were reasonable, and in January 1985 he told the Security Council in somewhat jubilant tones that he expected the meeting in that month

> "to conclude an agreement containing the necessary elements for a comprehensive solution to the problem, aimed at establishing a Federal Republic of Cyprus."

The hon. Member for Streatham properly set out the failure of both that initiative and the subsequent initiatives of the Secretary-General. Progress was not made. What is happening on the island can be characterised as drift, stalemate and the failure of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make serious progress. I advise those hon. Members who dissent from that view to read the Secretary-General's last report. Its terms are negative and sad. The Secretary-General is personally very much on top of events in Cyprus. He knows very well what is happening there and he has the confidence of all the major players on the stage.

I invite hon. Members to look at the Secretary-General's report for the period 1 December 1986 to 29 May 1987, which was delivered to the Security Council on 29 May 1987. It makes very depressing reading. It says that no progress was possible, that the Secretary-General had pursued his efforts to find a way to overcome the existing impasse and that he had suggested a period of informal discussion, which might help to bring about progress, but that both sides had been unable to make progress. In effect, the Secretary-General said that both sides reiterated the positions that they had adopted in respect of the 1986 proposals.

In October 1987, the Minister of State said that we must still rely on the Secretary-General's initiatives. That refrain becomes a little less credible if we honestly come to the belief—the last report of the Secretary-General tends to confirm this—that he is unlikely to make any serious progress on his current initiative.

[Mr. Anderson]

There appears to have been a hardening of attitudes and, although the mediation of the Secretary-General has not broken down, he has done no more than keep the two sides together in a process of discussion. The last resolution of the Security Council in June 1987 — resolution No. 597 — rather despairingly requested the Secretary-General to

"continue his mission of good offices, and calls upon all parties to co-operate with the peace-keeping force."

We all know that even the contingents to the peace-keeping force are under threat; the Swedish contingent is pulling out by 1 January 1988.

During the debate in October 1987, the Minister stated her belief that support of the Secretary-General's mission represented the most effective way of pursuing our goal in Cyprus, and she said that we are not alone in that belief. In the light of the current stalemate, we are bound to ask whether that remains a wholly tenable position and, if the current stalemate continues, at what point the Government will be prepared to take some initiatives. Otherwise, there will be considerable suspicion in the House that the formula of relying on the Secretary-General's good offices is being used as a cover for inaction on the part of Her Majesty's Government, for dragging their feet and refusing to consider any new initiative.

We recognise the complexities of the problem — the intercommunal and international relations aspects. The House has achieved a basic consensus. We agree that United Kingdom interests are involved for historic, human and military reasons and because of our contribution to the United Nations force, which last year cost us £27 million. We further agree that Britain, as a guarantor power, and for the reasons outlined, has, or should have, a role to play in the resolution of the conflict in Cyprus.

We should be most careful to do nothing that might be construed as according any form of recognition to the Administration in north Cyprus. The Minister of State, I am sure inadvertently, fell into that trap during the debate in October when she spoke about north and south Cyprus, as if one were dealing with two Administrations with equal validity.

We must remember that there is a republic of Cyprus, which is a member of the Commonwealth, and it is to that entity, and that alone, that we should accord any formal relations. We must be very careful, in terms of trade or any other relations, to do nothing that could be construed as recognition. I noticed, for example, that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) referred to "President Denktash". That is the wrong way of addressing Mr. Denktash, and it accords a spurious recognition to the Administration in the north.

As to such recognition, the Minister may have noticed that in June 1986 the *Christian Science Monitor* quoted what it called "western officials" as saying that recognition — that is, the recognition of the regime of the Administration in the north — was inevitable in a few years' time. It claimed that several countries, notably Bangladesh, Indonesia and some Gulf states, had said that they would recognise the Administration if the United Nations initiative was seen to fail. That imposes certain constraints on us and makes it necessary to find an appropriate successor to the Secretary-General's initiative if it becomes clear that it is unlikely to produce a solution. Obviously, we have to bear in mind the objective of preventing any permanent partition in the island.

A key feature of the situation is the Turkish invasion and subsequent consolidation. Whatever may have been the legal and practical justification for the invasion — there are two ways of interpreting the treaty of guarantee — there can be no justification for consolidation of the position subsequent to the invasion. It is creating facts that make it more difficult to find a long-term solution to the problems of the island.

At the end of any process, there are certain principles that have to be upheld. For example, the invading Turkish army must withdraw. Several hon. Members have mentioned the problems of the settlers who provide some of the electoral support for Mr. Denktash. They probably now form no less than 20 per cent. of the residents of the Turkish Cypriot part of the island. There must be a settlement that involves justice for the refugees of both communities but, in terms of numbers, that must relate principally to the Greek Cypriot refugees.

There must be security guarantees for both communities. We must not allow a situation to recur such as that in 1974, which was able to justify the intervention because of the legitimate fears of the Turkish Cypriot community at that time. It is not for us to prescribe any form of internal constitution, but a unitary state seems less and less possible, given the facts.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the fact that there may be an opening of windows of opportunity in respect of making progress. That point was made by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. Member for Haringey——

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I think that the hon. Gentleman means my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi).

Mr. Anderson: I am delighted to have that co-operation from the Minister.

The changes that have occurred or are in prospect include the Turkish elections. All friends of Turkey welcome the elections. Major reservations still remain about human rights, emergency powers and prisoners of conscience, but it is clear that Mr. Ozal clearly enjoys wide and popular support within Turkey. There is now a more open and genuine expression of opinion and a major step has been taken on the road to democracy within Turkey. Mr. Ozal has been given an opportunity several years before the next election, and he can decide whether to use it constructively in respect of building bridges with Greece and seeking to find a solution to the Cypriot problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) quoted Mr. Ozal from the time of the election. He said that he is keen to improve relations with Greece.

The other new factor is the coming elections in Cyprus next February. If the result is conclusive, the leader who emerges will be in a stronger position in coming negotiations.

A number of hon. Members have referred to the Community and the Turkish application for full membership which is mentioned in the motion. That will give us and other Community members some leverage in respect of the situation in Cyprus. The motion says that we should show our concern about the island now that Turkey has applied to join the Community.

Judging by past statements, the Government's position appears to be that there is no nexus between Turkey's application to join the Community and the illegal occupation of Cyprus by Turkish troops. Surely that position is wholly untenable. We know the problems that are anyway likely to be posed by Greece in respect of that application. Now that Turkey has applied for membership, and given the known policies of Mr. Ozal, we cannot ignore the leverage that the EEC may have. If the British Government are serious about a settlement in Cyprus, the Turkish occupation is naturally relevant and it is a clear obstacle to progress on the Turkish application.

I know from my experience of diplomatic usage that one would not expect that to be trumpeted from the rooftops, but Britain and other members of the Community should make it clear to the Turkish Government that if they wish to improve their relations with Greece and reach a constructive settlement of the Cyprus problem — it places an economic burden on Turkey to have to support the northern part of Cyprus — they cannot ignore the European context and their wish eventually to join the Community.

Given that the context has improved as a result of the Community application by Turkey, the Turkish elections and, one hopes, the elections in Cyprus in February next year, how do we make progress? Clearly we cannot rely indefinitely on the Secretary-General's good offices if it becomes clear that they are not producing results. That would be a gross injustice to the refugees. As I said, one of the sadder facts is that time is not on our side. As time passes, new facts are established. The Turkish Cypriot community will increasingly lose its identification as Cypriots and the settlers will be seen to be putting down roots so that it will become more difficult to have them return to the mainland. By our inaction, we are supporting the continuance of the status quo and the permanent partition of the island.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington reminded us of the tantalising phrase used by the Minister at the end of the debate on 23 October:

"We have contingency plans to cover the fact that, sadly, it"—

the international conference—

"might fail. I hope that we will not need to put them into action and I am sure that my hon. Friends will understand that those contingency plans need to remain confidential." —[*Official Report*, 23 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 1112]

Clearly, there is a strong hint that the Government are coming to the conclusion that the current initiatives are not working and that something else needs to be tried.

I hope that the Government are prepared to take the House into their confidence to some extent. The Government have ruled out the idea of an international conference, proposed by the Greek-Cypriot community and opposed by the Turkish-Cypriot community. They have ruled out other possible initiatives. When will the Government be a little more positive and reveal what they have in mind? Do they rule out, as a matter of principle, any initiative on a guarantor power basis? Are they saying that the European Community has no role in finding a solution to the conflict on the island?

It may be said that the United Nations' initiative is not succeeding, but an initiative on a regional basis, involving the European Community and recognising the links of all the relevant parties within it, might be a more fruitful approach. Have the Government ruled out a European Community initiative as a matter of principle? If not, what are their positive proposals? Do they believe that there is leverage within the European context? Does the Minister consider that the Community has a special role? As yet, the Community has not been seriously brought into play.

The background is the illegality of the Administration in north Cyprus and the injustices, largely relating to the dispossessed Greek Cypriot refugees. That background requires not folded arms or sheltering behind the formula of the Secretary-General's initiative — that good offices must continue to be the best prospect — but serious concern and a willingness to take other initiatives.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I trust that I am not interrupting my hon. Friend's peroration. In as much as it is not clear quite what the Government have in mind, has it occurred to my hon. Friend that perhaps the British Government are considering making it plain to the Government in Turkey that even their application to be considered for membership of the European Community will be opposed by Her Majesty's Government until real progress is made towards removing troops from Cyprus? It is anomalous and a double standard that this application should be allowed to proceed and then, perhaps, if Turkey joins the Community, there will be a trade-off by removing some troops or reducing some commitment. The application itself could be opposed.

Mr. Anderson: I would welcome the Minister's response to that suggestion. It is clear that Britain and the European Community are well placed to find a constructive end to the de facto partition on the island. We should not shirk that responsibility.

1.32 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I am glad to have the opportunity to intervene in the debate. My only regret is that it is I, and not my right hon. Friend the Minister of State — the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) — who is replying to it, because she has responsibility within the Office for this area. As I think hon. Members will have seen from the newspapers, she has been on a long and arduous mission to southern Africa. She arrived back just this morning: hence my appearance here. I regret that I am not as well immersed in this topic as some hon. Members who have spoken and am not as knowledgeable of it as I am of those areas of the world for which I carry responsibility. I shall do my best to reply to the points. If my level of expertise proves inadequate, I shall refer to my right hon. Friend for an authoritative view.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on his good fortune in winning the ballot and on the manner in which he opened the debate. He set it in a historical context, and it is interesting that, on a highly contentious subject, all those hon. Members who referred to his speech did so with approval. He was followed by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) who is much respected and liked by hon. Members of all parties. He said that, despite the differences between the views of individual hon. Members, the House should be united in its desire to see some progress in Cyprus and some repair of the damage done by more than 20 years of separation.

I agree wholeheartedly, and that is the Government's position. Indeed, it has been the view of all hon. Members

[Mr. David Mellor]

who have spoken. Although inevitably our debate has reflected the divisions in Cyprus which make it so difficult for progress to be made, and have made that difficult over such a long period, the debate has been conducted in a good atmosphere, and I have no shortage of points to which to reply.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey had the opportunity to set out the Government's overall position a few weeks ago, and because other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall not repeat the points that she made. Instead, I shall try to focus on points on which I can give further clarification because that should be helpful and should enable me to sit down in good time so as to enable those hon. Members who have sat patiently through the debate, waiting their turn, to have the opportunity to speak. It would be unfortunate if they were unable to do so.

Because of our historic connection with Cyprus, we are perhaps more aware than any other country, outside the two that are especially concerned with the dispute for ethnic reasons, that the division of Cyprus is tragic and wasteful. We must bend every sinew to try to ensure that there is a peaceful, just and lasting settlement. Indeed, that is what we are doing. Our position is to try to see a settlement reached by giving every possible support to the United Nations initiative. I should make it absolutely clear that that initiative is designed to bring about a unified federal Cyprus. We support that. We do not recognise the so-called independent state in northern Cyprus, nor shall we do so.

I advise the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), for whom, as he knows, I have boundless admiration and affection, that I cannot help feeling that he made a slightly bad point in referring to my right hon. Friend's comments during that Adjournment debate. All that she said was:

> "The division between the north and south of Cyprus, as it is sometimes colloquially described, weakens Cyprus in all sorts of way and it weakens the Nato Alliance."—[*Official Report*, 23 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 1109.]

My right hon. Friend gave a geographical description of the realities of the division, and it is a bad point on the part of the hon. Member for Swansea, East to suggest that my right hon. Friend was somehow institutionalising that, or suggesting that the British Government support it. We do not. We seek a unified and federal Cyprus. My right hon. Friend was properly forthright in saying that she wished that the 1986 initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General had been accepted by both sides. That is the Government's position.

We have tried to help the Secretary-General in every way. Indeed, he has been kind enough to say how much he values our help. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has met President Kyprianou in London no fewer than five times since the start of the United Nations initiative and has had talks with the Secretary-General about Cyprus on several occasions. There are frequent high-level meetings with all parties in which we try to bring home our views in support of the Secretary-General's initiative. We believe that there is still plenty of room for making progress on that initiative and that he offers the best prospects of progress towards settlement.

It must be understood that any progress that has been made during the past few decades has always taken place within the framework of the United Nations. The record of initiatives outside that framework, without the co-operation of all the parties, has always been poor. The Secretary-General's initiative remains the best prospect. Indeed, he has just appointed a new special representative, Mr. Camilion, from Argentina. Obviously, it will take Mr. Camilion some time to take stock of the situation and consider how to move forward, but he should be supported in that effort.

Again, in a spirit of amity towards the hon. Member for Swansea, East I must point out the irony that, as the representative on earth of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey this morning, I am compelled to defend the Government's support for the United Nations initiative. Yet when I return to the safer—in terms of my knowledge—but equally precarious—in terms of the difficulty of finding a solution—area of the Gulf war, I am berated by the same hon. Gentleman for refusing to support a United Nations naval force. There is an element of opportunism in the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Anderson: Surely it is the Minister who is now making a bad point. I am speaking of effectiveness. The whole Gulf initiative has spread over a much shorter time span than have the good offices of the United Nations' Secretary-General in respect of Cyprus. I simply asked, and ask again, whether the Government, as a result of the passage of time and the rather depressing reports of the Secretary-General, have decided that his initiative is on the point of being played out. If so, what other initiatives do they have in mind?

Mr. Mellor: No. Far from being played out, the Secretary-General's initiative is taking on a new lease of life with the appointment of a new special representative. The Secretary-General is not to be blamed for the failure of his initiative, which got a long way in 1986; it is more a sign of the intractability of the problem.

When people talk of a fresh initiative, there is always an element of hucksterism, because every politician worth his salt goes round with several fresh initiatives on every conceivable human problem falling from his pockets in the hope that the elucidation of the initiative is sufficiently attractive for people not to worry about the long-term inadequacies of the proposal. No matter who takes the initiative, whether the Government, the United States, the EC, or the Commonwealth Action Group, our view is that any such separate initiative would only cut across the Secretary-General's initiative and would not start from at least the position of hope of the Secretary-General's initiative, which both parties said they wanted and both states which support both parties said they wanted. That is why we believe that it is right to continue to support that initiative.

I reject the hon. Gentleman's implication that this is somehow just a fig leaf to hide our nakedness and unwillingness to think about the issue.

Mr. Anderson *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I will give way, but the hon. Gentleman, who spoke for a long time, is simply making it less likely that I can allow others to speak, so this is his last bite of the cherry. I say again: please, please, please, may the good Lord give him the merit of consistency. The next time he starts lecturing me on United Nations initiatives on the middle east, I shall remind him of some of his comments this morning.

Mr. Anderson: If the Government are so confident about the initiative, why, oh why, did the Minister mention the contingencies?

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey was responding to a direct question about whether the Government had given any thought to what might happen if the Secretary-General's initiative failed. We do not believe that it will fail; it must not be allowed to fail. My right hon. Friend believes, as I do, that there are no parameters on the human imagination. Naturally, all the guarantor powers are giving some thought to what might happen if in future there were a vacuum. It would be irresponsible to do otherwise, and it would be extraordinary if we had not.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) put the point much more attractively. He did not use this as a weapon against the Government, but suggested that those comments might have given rise to some misunderstanding. The point was made with his customary fairness which, I am glad to say, is not merely confined to those Home Office issues on which we used to reach more agreement than was perhaps comfortable for our respective standing on either side of the great divide. All that my right hon. Friend was trying to do was to reassure the House that, of course, we look ahead. The Government's commitment is entirely to the Secretary-General's initiative, because that represents the best way forward. Anything that cuts across the Secretary-General would be unhelpful and would not get our support. We hope that we will not need to think in terms of a further initiative outside that framework.

In the time remaining I shall respond to some of the matters raised in the debate and I shall start with some of the interesting points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham. We are aware of the grave problems caused to very many people by partition. We do not have the locus standi to make representations about people who are not British citizens, but we pursue with vigour the claims by British citizens. Indeed, one of my constituents was quite gravely damaged in respect of his enjoyment of his property rights. The Turkish Cypriot claims commission has made about 350 awards to British citizens. The Turkish Cypriots say that some claims must await a political settlement. That is regrettable, and we shall continue to press our case.

My hon. Friend spoke about the draft framework of agreement of March 1986. That does not deal in detail with questions about the withdrawal of troops or the freedom to move, settle and own property. It reserved discussions on these items to working groups, with the proviso that the settlement was to be accepted only as a whole. We hope that that adequately safeguards all positions. Once again it is a matter for regret that this was rejected by one side.

In that context, I was asked about the bearing that all this has on Turkey's application to become a member of the European Community. It would be wrong for us to make any comment about the merits of Turkey's application in advance of receiving the commission's opinion. That is the proper way forward. I do not use that as an evasion and I make it clear to the House that the question of Turkish troops is a matter of great concern to the Government and we raise it regularly with the Government of Turkey. It was raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary when the Turkish Foreign Minister came to London in July. We have always made it clear that the withdrawal of Turkish troops must form part of any comprehensive future settlement.

I was also asked about tanks, in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend). He has been here for much of the debate and no one has done more to ensure that the issue of Cyprus is kept before the House. It was he who instigated the Adjournment debate on the matter in October.

We raise the matter of tanks at every opportunity, and when my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary raised it with the Turkish Foreign Minister in July, he was told that this upgrading was part of a programme that involved the whole Turkish army. The Turkish Foreign Minister also spoke about recent arms purchases by the Cyprus Government. We understand that the Turks have recently withdrawn some tanks. I say clearly that they should reduce the number still further, and we shall continue to urge them to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham and other hon. Members spoke about Nicosia airport. As my hon. Friend said, there are now airports in both parts of the island. We would certainly welcome any project that had the support of both sides and which brought them together in practical co-operation. Plainly, practical co-operation is a commodity of which there can never be too much in the present unhappy situation.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made a number of interesting points, especially when he spoke about Turkish settlers to which other hon. Members have also adverted. We believe that the issue will have to be dealt with in the context of an overall settlement. The hon. Gentleman and one or two other hon. Members make it seem as if there can be no other approach to the issue than theirs and that the problem is merely one of the colonising of a part of Cyprus with immigrants from Turkey. When the issue is described in those terms, that course of action may seem irresistible, but there is another element that makes the matter more complicated. I shall raise it in the interests of those who read the report of the debate and not because the Government take a contrary view to that which has been expressed by the hon. Member for Tooting. I wish them to appreciate, as we have had to do, that the matter is not so straightforward as some would suggest.

The Turkish Cypriot authorities say that some of those who are now counted as settlers are Turkish Cypriots who left the island in the troubled times of the 1960s and who have exercised their right to return. Others came to the island early on, when they were needed to help restart economic activity, and have since married into Turkish Cypriot families. There are others who are seasonal workers, who come and go. I put that on record merely to show that this is a somewhat more complicated matter than some would imply.

The hon. Member for Tooting talked about trade with northern Cyprus. It is true that we continue to trade with it, and the hon. Gentleman criticised us for doing so. The terms of article 5 of the European Community-Cyprus association agreement provide that member states trading with Cyprus should not discriminate between nationals or companies in Cyprus.

I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman when he implied that a trade embargo would bring about progress in Cyprus. On the contrary, we think that it would be wrong to try to punish individual Turkish Cypriots in that

[Mr. Mellor]

way. Indeed, we think that it would be counter-productive. Such a course would merely increase the disparities between the two communities. We know that GNP in the southern part of the island—I shall tread carefully in making these descriptions because I do not want them to be used against me in a future debate, when who knows who might be responsible for replying to it—in the republic that we recognise is three or four times that in the north, which exists only because of an occupation and independence that we do not recognise. An embargo on the north would serve only to increase the north's dependence on Turkey.

We hope that the United Nation's Secretary-General's efforts will be successful. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest that either side is prepared to make the effort necessary to build up the trust and confidence that is needed if any permanent solution is to be found. This would be true whosever hat was tossed into the ring as a mediator or who came as St. George to the rescue.

Too many of the comments made by those on both sides in Cyprus seem more concerned with obtaining support for their entrenched positions and bringing pressure on each other rather than anything more constructive. It is time for both sides to try to reacquire the habit of continuous and constructive co-operation that marked the earlier stages of the intercommunal talks. We think that Mr. Camilion's appointment is a challenge to which both sides must respond. Our role, in common with other members of the international community, is to encourage and support both sides in making difficult decisions and compromises, without which no solution can be found.

1.54 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): First, I must offer my apologies to the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) for having been unavoidably delayed in getting to the House this morning and for having missed most of what he had to say. I wish warmly to congratulate him on selecting this topic for debate. It has offered the House an opportunity to discuss at length and in some detail the problems of an island for which Britain has a special affection and responsibility, and to do so at greater length than was possible in the all-too-brief Adjournment debate on Cyprus some weeks ago.

I first became acquainted with the problems and the sadnesses of Cyprus through my constituents, many of whom are Cypriots from both communities. Some of them suffered grievously in 1974. For example, one had a home that he had built on his family's land at the place where he was born, but which was subject to occupation by the invading forces. Since 1974, he has not been able to return to his home. He has not received any compensation for the loss of that home, and has had to make an entirely new life in Britain. He is but one of many who have been similarly affected.

I have, however, become much more closely and directly acquainted with Cyprus because, two months ago, I had the opportunity to visit it and to see at first hand the current position. I do not think that anyone could possibly fail to be moved by the sight of the green line that divides the island. To come down a busy shopping street in the middle of Nicosia—the capital city—and be confronted with a troops station, an area of wasteland patrolled by the United Nations with barbed wire making an impenetrable barrier, can only make one very careful and sad about the state of the island.

Looking down from the Troodos mountains in the area around Morfu — the greenest, most beautiful and productive part of the island—and then to talk to those who used to live there and can no longer return, is a moving experience. One can look down on the ghost town of Famagusta from the dividing line, and know that no life goes on in many parts of it and that its former residents cannot return there. From most parts of Nicosia, one can look up and see the Turkish flag that has been inscribed in stone on the hillside above that town.

To see that at first hand and to experience directly what it means to have a bitterly divided island, is something for which I am most grateful. It has certainly dramatically altered my thinking on Cyprus——

Mr. George: My hon. Friend has spoken poetically and with great feeling about the suffering on one side of the island. Does he think that his process of self-education would be enhanced if he had the opportunity to talk to people on the other side of the island? He would find there some 103 villages whose people were swept out between 1964 and 1974.

While my hon. Friend can cite many instances of suffering on one part of the island—all of which I endorse—is he aware that the whole island has suffered? If any blame is to be apportioned it should not be—as he appears to be suggesting—largely in one direction; it must be widely apportioned.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend has anticipated some of my arguments. I certainly do not wish to apportion blame entirely to one side. I happen to believe that the greater part of the blame must lie with the invading armed forces, but there has been tragedy on both sides of the communal divide in Cyprus.

Many Turkish Cypriots have suffered, and they suffered before 1974. When trying to establish a solution, we must ensure that all Cypriots, both Greeks and Turks, can feel entirely safe, protected and fulfilled within the solution. I have found very few Greek Cypriots who disagree with that analysis. If I had the opportunity—I would welcome such an opportunity—to talk to people in the northern part of the island, I suspect that there would be no overwhelming disagreement with that ultimate aim. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) agrees with that aim.

The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) clearly stated that Britain has a special responsibility in these matters. We are the former colonial power and were one of the guarantor powers under the constitution. As the hon. Member for Dorset, West rightly said, the British Government did nothing when the 1974 invasion occurred. I freely admit that that was the wrong decision. Intervention could have prevented what has subsequently become a long-running tragedy.

What do we want to achieve? There must be substantial agreement among hon. Members about the ultimate aim. There must be an undivided island, with full freedom of movement for all Cypriots everywhere in the island. The existence of the green line and the restrictions that it places on people's movements, is the overwhelming and dominant fact of life in Cyprus today.

The removal of that division must be one of the elements of any solution. As part of that solution, it is

important that people are regarded as Cypriots, not as Greeks or Turks. They must be regarded as part of a united island of Cyprus. To achieve that, and to ensure that the rights of minorities within the island are protected —that must be part of a solution—the proposals that have consistently come forward over the past decade and a half for a federal solution as the constitutional objective must be the right way forward. It is a considerable tribute to the Greek Cypriot community that it has consistently accepted the idea of a federal solution as something it could support if its position were safeguarded.

There must also be international guarantees. We must ensure that the guarantees are worth more than those written into the original constitution. However, other steps must also be taken. There must be a genuine effort to investigate the cases of missing persons. About 1,600 Cypriots are missing and many families do not know what has become of relatives or what happened to them in 1974. That still rankles with many people and has left many families torn, divided and embittered. It is important that those cases are investigated. It is a pity that there has not been more co-operation with the efforts of the United Nations to investigate those missing Cypriots, especially from the authorities in the northern part of the island.

There must be a solution to the problem of refugees returning to their homes, and to the issue of the settlers. While I accept from the Minister that some settlers who have come from mainland Turkey to the north of the island have a genuine connection with Cyprus, many have not. In discussions to find a solution, we must resolve what will happen to those settlers and to the property they occupied, which formerly belonged to others.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the withdrawal of foreign troops is absolutely crucial to any solution. On that point I disagree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South said about the 1986 proposals from Perez de Cuellar and their acceptance by Mr. Denktash. The presence of foreign troops on the island meant that the Cypriot Government was not able to accept the proposals which were accepted by the Denktash regime. Foreign troops from both sides must be removed entirely from the island before there can be any solution which will ensure a free-moving, protected and integral federal Cyprus.

The key lies not just in the continuing and valiant efforts of the Secretary-General; as much pressure as possible must be brought to bear on the newly elected Government of Turkey to ensure that they are prepared to withdraw Turkish troops. That message must be made crystal clear to Mr. Ozal and his Government. Our Government are in a very strong position to bring such pressure to bear, as Turkey wishes to join the European Economic Community and become part of the European community of nations. We must seize the opportunity to reinforce the message about the withdrawal of troops.

Everyone who goes to Cyprus must be struck, as I was, by the disparity between the two economies. I have nothing but admiration for the success of the Cypriots in the south. While I accept that they have the advantage of the sun, which brings tourists, the economy, which has a growth rate of 6 per cent. a year, unemployment at 2 per cent. and inflation at 3 per cent., must be the envy of even our self-congratulatory Chancellor of the Exchequer. That success has been achieved in the past 15 years, at the same time as one third of the population has been rehoused, and the south of the island provides all the electricity to the north entirely free. In those circumstances, it is an economic miracle. On the other hand, the north is still economically depressed. That is a tragedy, especially bearing in mind that in 1974 the north had about 70 per cent. of the island's economic resources. It is important that we look at how the economies have developed.

I ask the Minister whether he will ask his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry to investigate the tax position of the Polly Peck company. Polly Peck is using resources that were seized when the north of Cyprus was invaded. I understand that it claims immunity from United Kingdom taxation under our "no double taxation" policy. I understand that it pays no tax in northern Cyprus either. Given the most recent substantial profits of the Polly Peck company, it is important to establish under which taxation regime it ought to come. If Polly Peck is not paying tax in the north of Cyprus, we have to ask why the no double taxation policy is being maintained for Polly Peck and why no corporation tax is due on the company's British activities. I hope that the Minister will draw the attention of his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry to that fact. It may be worthy of investigation; the Government may be forgoing tens of millions of pounds in tax.

I draw attention also to British-owned property in northern Cyprus, to which the owners do not have access. I understand that there has been considerable disagreement between Mr. Leonard Fairclough, the owner of the Salamis Bay hotel, and the authorities in the northern part of the island. Furthermore, the properties of British American Tobacco in Cyprus include the building in which the parliament of the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus meets. British property owners have rights in northern Cyprus. I refer not just to those who have lost their homes but also to those who have lost access to commercial properties and the income derived from it.

I should have thought that that issue would have concerned a Government who believe in market forces as sincerely as this Government appear to do. The Government ought to be pursuing those matters, and I am surprised that they are not doing so. This debate may encourage the Government to take an interest in them.

We must make every conceivable effort that we can to bring about a just resolution of the problems that face Cyprus. We must bring unity to the island and ensure the removal of all foreign troops. We must give a warm-hearted people back their homes, their freedom of movement and their remarkably beautiful homeland.

2.12 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): This has been a very useful debate, which has highlighted many of the problems that face the unhappy island of Cyprus. My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) is to be congratulated on having introduced it, thereby giving the House an opportunity to discuss in detail the problems of Cyprus. Those problems are shared by many of our constituents. I am sure that I am not alone in having constituents who came to this country from Cyprus, or who have families or property there. They have suffered grievously from the problems that have beset Cyprus during the 13 years since the island was invaded. But they suffered before the invasion because of the conflict

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

between the Turkish and the Greek Cypriots. It is difficult for us to imagine their sufferings during the last 20 or 30 years.

The problem goes back before the time, when we fought against EOKA. It goes back to when there was already conflict between the Greek and Turkish settlers on the island. It led to Cyprus being brought into the British Empire. Disraeli returned with peace and honour from a conference to solve the Turkish problem and produced Cyprus out of the bag as a way of ensuring that we could defend the entrance to the Suez canal.

My only reason for mentioning that is that today Cyprus is a key strategic location to monitor what is happening in that part of the Mediterranean and the middle east. As long as Cyprus is an area of potential conflict between the Greeks and Turks, and as long as they see that as the crystallisation of their mutual dislike for each other, the problems in the Aegean sea will never go away, despite the friendly noises that emanate from time to time from Athens or Ankara. There is always potential for a change of regime in Greece or Turkey, which could spark a major conflict between the two countries.

Turkey considers itself to be a member of the European family, and I understand that at some time it would like to join the Common Market. In reality, it is more strongly allied to the middle eastern countries, partly through the historical conquests that the Turks went in for under the Ottoman empire, but, more strongly these days, because of the religious connection between the bulk of the population of Turkey and the strongly religious countries that form the bulk of the middle east.

Turkey's role is pivotal to the solution of the Middle East problem. Turkey recognises that, as do many of the Gulf countries, which are so critical of finding a solution to the conflict in the Gulf.

Cyprus is part of that problem, and it is part of the solution to the tragic conflict in Lebanon. Cyprus has played a role there, largely because of its geographical position, but one that in itself complicates the search for a solution to the dispute between the two nationalities on the island.

We must consider in detail what has happened in the past, as we have in the debate, and in a way that brings to the fore the traditional historic problems of the island. We must try to discover the reason for those problems and the reason for the mutual antagonism between the Turks and Greeks on the island. This tragic dispute has built up a large measure of mutual distrust between the two populations. We know from our own experience as constituency Members that, away from the island, the two communities can live happily together. The conflicts of the island do not carry over to their lives here.

What has led to that mutual disregard and mutual problem? It is an historic problem that has resulted from the dominance of the Greek community, which is partly based on numbers but also, as we heard from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), on the ability of the Greek community to prosper while the Turkish community has always failed to do so. Thus, there has not only been a national and religious separation between the two communities; there has been a growing economic separation. It has been growing not only since the invasion but long before, and had its roots way back in the developments of the 1950s and 1960s.

The difficulty is deep. The distrust was fostered by the Greek community when it tried to seek union with mainland Greece. That was the trigger point which led to the invasion by the Turkish troops in 1974. That invasion was deeply to be regretted. It was quite wrong and possibly, as we have heard, could have been stopped at the time. I was not terribly closely involved with that situation but I was involved in the middle east and my view is that the problems involved in stopping the invasion are easily understated. I suspect that the determination of the Turkish Government to invade Cyprus was strongly held and that they would not willingly have backed down from something they had perhaps wanted to do for 10 years — to put their troops on to the island to solve the problems once and for all.

It is no good us looking closely at history in the hope of finding a solution to the present problem. What has happened has happened and, regrettably, it cannot be undone. We have to look forward to find a solution. Greece is a member of the Common Market and Turkey is a member of NATO. Turkey has ambitions to join the Common Market, but I am sure I am not alone in believing that the Common Market would be wise to look carefully before it extends its borders to incorporate Turkey. I do not say that for any reason other than a purely economic one and, possibly, because of the relationship between Turkey and the middle east.

Once a country such as Turkey becomes a member of the Common Market, the likelihood of being forced to bring in countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and possibly even Algeria would increase, and the pressure to do so would become much more difficult to resist. We may find that the Common Market would cease to be a cohesive political and economic community—if it is not that at the moment, at least it has some hope of becoming one —and would become much more politically diverse. It would be more difficult to provide for the consensus we need if we are to develop the structure of the EEC institutions.

Cyprus, sitting as it does between Greece and Turkey, is a problem for which we have to find a solution. That raises the question of what shape the solution should take. We have heard of the various proposals that have come forward from the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Broadly speaking, they amount to some form of federal government inside the island. We have heard from the Select Committee the proposal to go one step lower down and develop cantonal government inside the island, presumably on the Swiss model. Both those proposals have considerable objections to them.

The two communities used to live closely together. To separate the two is as difficult as separating any other communities, in that it could give rise to injustices as to who is to move out and who is to move in. That would lead to disputes between families and communities which will live on long after everybody has forgotten the basis for the disputes. We are faced now with a de facto partition of the island which has led to a de facto federal system, although not a federal Government. By force of arms we have two separate countries inside the island. Rightly, the northern Government is not recognised by the British Government. Nevertheless, in terms of economic and military power, it exists as effectively as if it had been set up under a proper legal process.

There has been no solution to the serious problem that affects my constituents, as I am sure it affects other hon.

Members' constituents, of what is supposed to happen to the property inside either of those two parts of the island. We have not even begun to find a solution to that problem. It is not a problem of economics alone. It is not a question of the Turkish or Greek Government saying to those who were dispossessed in 1974, "We will compensate you for what you lost and enable you to start up somewhere else." The problem is much more emotional than that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, someone who has been farming a piece of land for years and whose family has been farming it for generations is emotionally attached to that land; it is historically his home. No amount of compensation can reconcile him to the loss of that land.

Economic factors may well dictate that those who have been displaced come to terms with it in the management of their affairs. However, I doubt whether many of them have come to terms with it in their emotional attitude to those who displaced them, whether Turks or Greeks. That is the major difficulty. We cannot go in and impose solutions from outside — any more, I fear, than the Turkish or, indeed, the Greek Government can now impose a solution. We need to find a solution acceptable to both the Greek and the Turkish communities in Cyprus that will reconcile their irreconcilable differences. It will take a long time to find such a solution. In the meantime, the best that we can hope is to give the Cypriots a period of tranquillity, peace and relative economic prosperity to provide the hope of a reconciliation of the two communities in the future.

The United Nations initiative perhaps goes some way to producing those conditions. It allows the possibility of the two communities running their own affairs and coming together in a federal structure of government inside the island which will allow for economic compensation to be made and for the communities slowly to learn to trust each other as they have not trusted each other—certainly in living memory and perhaps for the past 100 years.

That trust will take a long time to build up. The process needs to be given time not just by the United Nations coming in and providing a basis for a settlement and for troops to police any disputes that may occur. It must be given time by all of us assisting Cyprus and assisting north Cyprus to catch up with the economic prosperity of the south of the island. Unless the two halves can come together economically, the envy and greed that exist behind the injustices and moral outrage on the surface will never die down and time will never be allowed to heal the wounds and the divisions between the two communities.

We need to provide external stability. As a country with long historic links with the island, which still has bases there—the island is still of major strategic importance to us, to NATO and to the Western world—we need, in conjunction with America, which has a great influence on Turkey, to provide stability and economic assistance to both parts of the island. When the federal structure of government is in place and when the Cypriots have reached the stage at which there can be elections for the federal Government as well as for the local Governments, we can enable the island to overcome the economic disadvantages of the north which is being propped up largely by the influx of money from Turkey, which Turkey can ill afford.

My suggestion to the Government is that we need strongly to support the Secretary-General's initiatives. We need to give all the encouragement that we can and bring pressure, through NATO and the EEC, on Athens and Ankara to work towards a solution. We need to provide the back-up of economic support.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that in such delicate situations it does not help when the British Government make positive statements——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BBC (Injunction)

2.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should be grateful if you could give us some help. In his efforts to protect the interests of the House earlier, Mr. Speaker agreed to grant a private notice question on the Government's injunction against the BBC Radio 4 programme, because the Government had refused to make a statement. In deference to Mr. Speaker's efforts to protect our interests, we did not want to prolong the questions following that private notice question, especially as private Members' time would have been eaten away.

We have been pressing for the Attorney-General to make a further statement, not just because of what he said in his reply, but because he was talking about the culmination of a number of substantial efforts by the Government to interfere with the independence of the BBC. This is not an isolated incident. There have been political appointments to the board of governors and, rather more extraordinarily, political appointments at a lower level in the BBC, where in effect Government appointees are seen as spies on what is going on. We have seen overt pressure from the chairman of the Tory party——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Name one.

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman will wait, he will hear.

We have also seen the Government's efforts to prevent the Zircon film from being shown to Members. We have seen the raids on the BBC in Glasgow, which were related to that. We are in danger of the rest of the world seeing the BBC's reputation as so besmirched that it becomes the British State Broadcasting Corporation.

The Attorney-General said this morning that the Government had to intervene so late in the day because they had read about the nature of the programme in the gossip column — the "Peterborough" column — of *The Daily Telegraph*. We should like the right hon. and learned Gentleman to explain why, if the Government behave with such vigilance when they see references in *The Daily Telegraph* to spy programmes, they did not respond when they read the pre-reviews in the weekend newspapers on the programme's content.

One reference stated that the first programme would examine the roles of MI5, MI6 and the Government's communication headquarters and that next week it would cover "yesterday's spies and today's politicians." *The Observer* assured us that what would be broadcast today would be "an opening delve" behind the scenes of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ and the question would be: "Why do we need them?"

All the information that needed to be available for the Government to mount any legal action has been available to them for a long time. The Opposition find it difficult to believe that the security services did not know that there was to be a programme about the security services. If they did not, they are totally incompetent. We should like to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether you have had any representations from the Leader of the House or the Attorney-General to the effect that they intend to make a statement, preferably today or, if not, on Monday.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have heard the hon. Gentleman's long point of order. He will understand that the Chair is not responsible for the lack of early response which he claims that the Government could have made. However, I can tell him that Mr. Speaker has not received any application from either the Leader of the House or the Attorney-General to make a statement.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I should like to underline some points about the timing and contents——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I guide the hon. Lady? She must make a point of order and not a debating point. Will the hon. Lady please make a direct point of order to the Chair?

Ms. Ruddock: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I believe that the Government have a duty to make a statement to the House about the banning of that programme. I believe that because I was a participant in the programme and know something of its content.

My invitation to appear on the programme was given to me verbally in September. It was followed up by an open letter that came through the post to the House of Commons. At every stage, this matter was completely open and available to everybody, and I was free to tell everybody that I was participating. The programme covered an exploration of matters that are absolutely fundamental to the House of Commons, such as whether the citizens of this country have a right to know the way in which this country is governed, and whether the media, and especially the BBC, are free to inform the citizens of this country——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is not making a point of order. I shall give her another minute to come to a point of order. I know that she has a lot to say and if, within a minute, she comes to a point of order, I shall try to deal with it.

Ms. Ruddock: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I repeat that, because these are fundamental matters, we have the right to know. Therefore, the appropriate representative of the Government must make a statement so that we can understand. What we have been told is clearly inadequate and inaccurate and does not serve the purposes of the House of Commons. It does not reveal to us the reason for the banning of the programme. That suggests that the Government will be politically embarrassed by something in the programme and that it is not a matter of state——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has stated a matter of opinion, which, I fear, is not a point of order. However, she will have heard me say that it is not for the Chair to request or require Ministers to come to the House to make a statement. The Chair must wait for that application and request to be made.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The House recently debated what I believed to be a fundamental transgression of justice, when the pass of my research assistant Mr. Ronan Bennett, was suspended by the House. Many allegations were made at the time about the security services and the need to take the lid off them.

I think that you will agree, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is disturbing that, when the BBC was apparently

about to take the lid off the security services and their undemocratic behaviour, the Government have sought to use draconian powers to prevent those programmes from being broadcast. My point of order to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is this. If the Government are not prepared to apply through a Minister to make a further statement to the House, or to arrange for a debate in Government time on the security services, will you advise us by what means we can ensure, immediately or as soon as possible, that a full debate is held on the question of the control, or lack of control of the security services and the way in which public money is being spent by the Government to prevent the BBC from broadcasting information about the security services in just the same way as they prevented the broadcast of the films about Zircon, and the way in which they are spending vast sums of money to prevent the publication in this country of Peter Wright's book on the security services?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not attempt to drag the Chair into debate. This is not a matter for the Chair. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will note that the Leader of the House is in his place and may well have noted his comments.

Mr. Holt: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that the programme was intended to blow the lid off the security services——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. I am dealing with specific points of order and I have been fairly generous. Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Holt: I have not yet reached my point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. I shall return to him. I can hear only one voice at a time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): According to section (4) of Standing Order No. 11, which deals with Friday sittings,

"At eleven o'clock Mr. Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in his opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members".

It goes on and on, and I shall not read it out.

Earlier today, the Speaker was placed in a somewhat embarrassing position. It would have been straightforward and easy for the Government to comply with Standing Order No. 11 and tell the Attorney-General to make a statement about the freedom and liberty of the British people in relation to the gagging and censoring of the BBC by a party whose friends own and control most of the press, and which has a majority of 100 in the House. The Speaker was placed in a predicament from which he could hardly escape. Although he allowed several questions on the private notice question, because the matter was of such major public importance, he could not allow questions to continue much beyond half an hour.

You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that several weeks ago we had a similar situation on not such an important matter. The Attorney-General had to be brought to the House at 2.30 pm to explain himself and several hon. Members took the opportunity to ask him questions. With the censorship and gagging of the BBC—God knows where it will end with this Government—and with the apparatchiks stuck inside the BBC who somehow could not tell the Government about this programme that was about to be broadcast on Radio 4——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman coming to his point of order?

Mr. Skinner: Yes. In accordance with Standing Order No. 11, it would have been far better for this pathetic Government to tell the Attorney-General to make a statement. Because he has not made a statement but has put the Chair in this predicament and been dragged here kicking and squealing for a private notice question, he should be brought here now.

Hon Members: Now.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are no procedures by which any Minister can be brought to the House now. *[Interruption.]* Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order and he is correct in saying that under Standing Order No. 11 a private notice question can be asked or a statement made at 11 o'clock. Mr. Speaker wisely chose to accept the private notice question.

Mr. Holt: In accordance with our Standing Orders, we had a private notice question this morning and the Attorney-General came to the House and answered it. There is absolutely nothing further to add. Hon. Members will recall that, if the BBC had made available the information sought by the Official Solicitor, the Government would not have needed to seek an injunction, nor would we have needed a private notice question. All these points of order are wholly spurious, including mine.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I wish to raise a different point of order, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that the Speaker has been placed in an embarrassing position. It may have been because of the atmosphere at that time that I was unable to make myself understood and I should like to raise the issue of an hon. Member's ability to represent the interests of his constituents and others who refer matters to him or her as a Member for Parliament.

When we had problems in the past about obtaining clear answers to clear questions directed at Ministerial Departments and when Mr. Speaker received complaints about that, he said that there were other ways of investigating the issues. Very wisely, he never specifies those but says that other hon. Members may well advise the unfortunate Member who is in difficulty. One of those ways is the investigative journalist, and by gagging investigative journalists the Government are restricting the ability of hon. Members — especially Opposition Members—to represent their constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have heard the point of order made by the hon. Gentleman. This is becoming a debate, and I shall now accept only direct points of order.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): If the Attorney-General chooses to come to the House to discuss this matter, will it be in order for Conservative Members to raise with him the unhealthy obsession of the Opposition and perhaps some people in the BBC with our own security services, while they do not seem to be interested in the activities of the Russians?

Madam Deputy Speaker: We will see what happens when the time comes.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order. I appreciate the difficulties that you are in, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I do not wish to add to them. I know that Mr. Speaker was in similar difficulties earlier. This is not the first time that something like this has occurred when a matter of considerable public interest has been raised and when it has been impossible for the House to discuss matters in the form of a ministerial statement—even when those matters have been widely discussed outside the House in the media and among people generally.

My point of order is, would it be in order for the Leader of the House, who is present, and whom perhaps I can address through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make some statement about the affairs that were discussed this morning by way of a private notice question? Perhaps he could give an assurance that, in future when a matter of grave public concern that is clearly of interest to the House is raised outside the House, he will use whatever good offices he can to ensure that the appropriate Minister comes to the Dispatch Box?

Madam Deputy Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Banks: My point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thought that the hon. Member had made his point of order.

Mr. Banks: I was going to conclude my point of order be saying that what we witnessed this morning was the Opposition doing their job and that it is generally accepted that we do that adequately and well. We had to raise on a private notice question a matter that should have been the subject of a ministerial statement. The Attorney-General spoke about the horse leaving the stable. It is not the horse that we are concerned about, but the mess that is left in the stable, and that is why, to make sure——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the hon. Gentleman's point of order, which was, would the Leader of the House make a statement? The answer is no. Points of order are for the Chair to deal with and I shall deal with them.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): This is a point of order specfic to you, Madame Deputy Speaker, about the events of this morning. This is not the first time that we have seen a steady erosion of the rights of the legislature in the face of the Executive. They have consistently refused to come to the legislature and explain themselves and hold themselves accountable. It is made clear in the pages of "Erskine May" that one of our privileges in the legislature is freedom of speech.

My specific point of order to you, Madame Deputy Speaker, is that the usual channels exist. Mr Speaker this morning, and you this afternoon, are constantly placed in embarrassing situations. The way out of that embarrassment is through the usual channels that Mr. Speaker has, you may have to explain to the Government that it is not good enough for the legislature to be treated in this fashion.

Madame Deputy Speaker: I am sure that that point of order has been heard on the Treasury Bench and in all parts of the House.

Hon. Members: Come on, make a statement.

Madame Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Allen.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to that point of order, Madame Deputy Speaker. I had the great privilege of being one of the draftsmen or authors of the very renowned document on the security services that currently constitutes Labour party policy for debates. Of course, that was before I entered the House. As a new Member of the House, I had obviously assumed that the security services could be discussed in the House. I find that I cannot table questions at the Table Office——

Madame Deputy Speaker : Order. This point of order does not at all relate to this matter.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should listen to me for a moment. Unless his point of order directly relates to this matter, I must ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Allen: There is no departmental Select Committee overseeing the security services, and we cannot even examine the moneys that are allocated to those services. Therefore, we depend wholly upon the freedom of the press, so-called — *[Interruption]* — to examine these matters. I find now that we cannot even listen to a BBC radio programme. I was looking forward to the programme, as I cannot ask questions in the House on security matters, I thought that I might learn something from outside. I ask that the Leader of the House or the Attorney-General — again, there is no departmental Select Committee to oversee the work of the Attorney-General—make a statement to Parliament rather than through the pages——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There has been no application made to Mr. Speaker for a statement today.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I appreciate fully the difficult position in which Mr. Speaker was placed earlier this morning as a result of the Government's failure voluntarily to make a statement. Mr. Speaker generously allowed more time than he would normally have done for a private notice question. However, I and several of my colleagues who wished to question the Attorney-General were unable to do so because of the time constraint which Mr. Speaker was under.

There are major issues at stake involving the relationship between the Government and the media and the Government and their own servants, civil servants. Also involved is the degree of accountability to which a Government and their actions can be held by the general public in a democracy. These are all important issues, and one of the mechanisms that is open to us to pursue them further is to apply for an emergency debate on Monday.

I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether Mr. Speaker or yourself will be able to view favourably an application, if it is tabled on Monday, for an emergency debate to discuss these grave issues which arise from the Government's——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern but he has raised a rather hypothetical point. The hon. Gentleman must wait until Monday.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the tape of the programme that the Government have

prevented from being broadcast be made available to hon. Members so that we can make a reasoned judgment about the programme, either through the good offices of the Government in their contacts with the BBC, if they have any, or through Mr. Speaker's Office? If the tape is made available to hon. Members themselves, will they be permitted to play it in the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair. It is certainly not a matter to which the Chair can respond.

St. Saviour's School, Ealing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

2.53 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton) *rose*——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn amd St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We all recognise the predicament in which you, and Mr. Speaker found yourselves this morning. We, too, are in a predicament. Of all the possible justifications that the Attorney-General might have advanced for yesterday's court action, I do not think that anyone in his wildest dreams believed that he would say that it was based on an item in a gossip column in a Tory newspaper. That is why we are pressing, rather unusually, for a further statement. Neither you, Madam Deputy Speaker, nor Mr. Speaker, can require a Minister to make a statement, but can you confirm, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if a private notice question were to be submitted on Monday and accepted by Mr. Speaker, the Attorney-General would then be required to make a statement?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is somewhat hypothetical, as I explained earlier. I recognise the seriousness of the situation and I have no doubt that any private notice question submitted would be considered extremely seriously.

Sir George Young: I welcome this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the position of St. Saviour's Church of England first school in my constituency. I do so with some optimism, as I recall the decisive intervention of my hon. Friend the Minister when, on a previous occasion, I raised with him the need for a new building at Twyford school, which is also in my constituency. I hope that the case of St. Saviour's will provoke the same favourable response.

Earlier this week, the House gave a Second Reading to the Education Reform Bill, which is designed to make the system more responsive to the wishes of parents and to raise standards. In 15 minutes today, my hon. Friend the Minister could achieve those objectives for St. Saviour's without the hassle of having to put a Bill on the statute book.

I wish to provide some basic background information. St. Saviour's became a first school in September 1974, having been an infants' school since 1861. The site could not be enlarged at that time as the boundaries of the Ealing town centre scheme had not been finalised, so the additional children had to be accommodated in temporary huts erected in the playground. The site, which was already substandard under the school premises regulations of 1972, then became even more so. In 1981, new school premises regulations were published, with which, as an existing school, St. Saviour's must comply by 1991. Under those new regulations, the site and the building are substantially substandard.

By 1982, the town centre scheme had been finalised and it was then possible for the council to define the site for the school extension. Three years ago, the land was transferred to the education committee for the purposes of St. Saviour's, and ever since then has been lying as waste ground, while conditions at the school continue to deteriorate.

[Sir George Young]

In 1983, the governors — in consultation with the local education authority, the diocesan board and the Department of Education and Science area architect — instructed architects to draw up a development plan for the school. That was then submitted to the DES for approval in the building programmes for 1985-86. That submission was refused. Further submissions for the building programmes for 1986-87 and 1987-88 were also refused. They have been resubmitted for 1988-89, and as I speak they are sitting in my hon. Friend's in tray — hence the opportune timing of the debate.

The London borough of Ealing has designated the development as its top priority among the bids from local voluntary schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend were successful, a few weeks ago, in obtaining additional resources for the education programme in the public expenditure round. I have no doubt that they could not find a better project in which to invest those additional resources than the much delayed building programme at St. Saviour's.

I want to describe some of the problems at the school, which I have visited on many occasions. I have already mentioned the temporary huts that were put up in 1974. Quite naturally, they are progressively deteriorating and there is a growing cost in maintaining them. When it rains or snows, because those temporary huts are in the playground the children who need to use the facilities in the main school get wet. There is no library at the school as there simply is not room for one. Therefore, no library skills can be taught, nor can a wide variety of reference books be made available to the children.

The main building, which dates back to 1861, has a highly dangerous spiral staircase, on which several by-elections have almost been caused. Quite rightly, that must be replaced for safety reasons. There is no medical room, and any ill child must stay in a stock room. The administration area is inadequate—there is not sufficient room in the staff room for each member of staff to sit down at any meeting. There is only one adult lavatory. The head's office must be shared, which makes it difficult to hold confidential discussions with parents. The playground is very substandard in quality and quantity. There is an acknowledged need for a nursery unit as there is no nursery school in any of the Church schools in the borough. There is nowhere for parents to meet.

It is much easier to show the problems than to describe them, so the parents and teachers have prepared a brochure — which I handed to the Secretary of State a few weeks ago — which gives a visual representation of the problem that speaks for itself. In a nutshell, the school is desperately overcrowded, especially in the administrative area. Those are not the sort of condition in which teachers should teach and children should learn in the 1980s.

Despite the difficult conditions, it is an excellent school. It is very popular and is over-subscribed. The reasons for that are entirely to the credit of Angela Mark, the head, the staff, the governors and the parents, who have created a popular, cheerful and successful school under rather difficult conditions. They have already raised £38,000 towards the rebuilding project and are raring to go. However, they cannot possibly proceed without support from the Department of Education and Science. Of course, the cost rises each year. Therefore, the parents and the Friends of St. Saviour's find themselves shooting at an ever-moving target.

The parents and teachers have been patient. They are not militants and they have made their case to me persuasively and forcefully. They are aware that the economy of this country is picking up. They look around west London and see visible prosperity because the Government's economic policies are working. It is becoming very difficult for the local Member of Parliament to explain why, year after year, funds are not made available for this worthwhile project.

The parent body, the Friends of St. Saviour's to which I have referred, is totally committed to the school. There is an active parent-governors body and good support is given to the many extra-curricular and social events organised at the school. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), many of whose constituents have children at the school, has asked to be associated with the plea that I am making this afternoon.

I want to sum up my case to my hon. Friend the Minister. The site and the buildings are substandard according to the Government's education regulations. There is an acknowledged need for a nursery school on the site. The land for the school is now available and presently lying as waste ground on the edge of a very successful and environmentally pleasing town centre. The plans are available and the scheme is ready to go. The parents and governors are very committed and will raise their 15 per cent. share. The local authority and the diocesan board support the rebuilding of the school and local people vote confidently in favour of the school by over-subscribing to it year after year.

If there is one school which represents all that the Government and the Conservative party stand for in terms of standards, parental commitment and the rest, it is St. Saviour's. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give the parents, governors and myself the assurance we seek, that the building programme will not be delayed further.

3.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on obtaining this Adjournment debate on the voluntary aided capital programme and, in particular, the proposed building work at St. Saviour's school in Ealing. I am glad of the opportunity to reply. My hon. Friend has spoken eloquently on behalf of the school, but this is by no means the first time that he has raised this issue. His active and continuing support for the school typifies my hon. Friend's keen concern for the interests of his constituents. I ask my hon. Friend to thank those at the school who were responsible for preparing the silver brochure which graphically and pointedly shows the range and variety of problems that the school faces and has faced for some time.

My hon. Friend spoke of the problems faced by the staff and pupils of St. Saviour's. Before I reply to those points, I should like, if I may, to touch briefly on the general issues of national policy which underlie this question, since this background will contribute to an understanding of the position of St. Saviour's.

There are in England almost 25,000 primary and secondary schools within the state system, maintained by

local education authorities which meet their running costs. Most of these — rather over two thirds — are county schools, provided by the local education authorities. The remainder, known as voluntary schools, were provided by voluntary bodies — principally the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. This arrangement, introduced by the Education Act 1944, is known as the dual system. Voluntary schools make a very important contribution to the maintained sector of education. They bring variety to the provision of schools and they extend the range of educational choice available to parents for their children. The Government are strongly committed to the preservation of the dual system and the fostering of voluntary schools.

There are different types of voluntary school, but the largest category—to which St. Saviour's belongs—is that of voluntary aided schools. These are distinguished from voluntary controlled schools—the next most numerous type — by the greater powers possessed by their governors and by the division of responsbility for certain capital building and repair work. In brief, the governors are responsible for external repairs and for the greater part of capital building work, and they are entitled to seek from the Department a grant of 85 per cent. of the cost to them of such work.

The funds available to the Department for disbursement to governors are, however, limited. My hon. Friend knows that a fundamental element of the Government's economic strategy is the achievement of a sustained reduction in the rate of inflation. Only in this way can we generate the economic growth that is needed, and which is happening, to underpin the provision of state services. In order to achieve this, it is essential that public expenditure must be limited: expenditure on education, by both central and local government, cannot be exempt from the need for restraint.

In distributing the resources which are available for the voluntary sector, priorities therefore have to be decided and choices—often difficult choices—must be made. I should like, if I may, to outline the approach we take here. Each year the Department invites all local education authorities to submit details of their plans for capital expenditure in the following financial year at the county and voluntary schools in their areas. In aggregate, these plans always exceed what the country can afford. We are therefore faced with the difficult task of deciding between competing voluntary aided school projects. In doing so, our first priority is necessarily to meet continuing expenditure required for projects which have already started—committed expenditure, in other words.

Having met committed expenditure, our next priority must be to programme new projects which result from published statutory proposals which have been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under section 13 of the Education Act 1980. They are normally of two kinds: either the proposal is to establish a new school which is needed to provide new places in areas of population growth—this is known as "basic need"—or it relates to a reordering of provision in an area where the school population is declining, perhaps by amalgamating two or more schools so that a proportion of the surplus places can be taken out of use. Approval of such proposals places upon the proposers a statutory duty to implement them by a specified date. If building work is required in order to implement the proposals, it has to be programmed to avoid the risk of the proposers being unable to fulfil that duty.

The third priority, after such "committed" and "statutory" expenditure has been allowed, is for work which, for convenience, I will refer to under the blanket title of "improvement". Projects of this sort include minor alterations or extensions to existing school buildings; replacements of failing or unsatisfactory structures, such as outside lavatories or aging "temporary" accommodation; and work intended to bring a split-site school on to a single site.

Regrettably, we are always faced with many more worthy projects in this category than can be accommodated within the available resources, and hard choices have to be made on the basis of the urgency of the need and the general condition of the school buildings in question. In making these assessments, we draw upon the views of the maintaining local education authorities and, where appropriate, upon the expertise and experience of the Department's officials. We also have to bear in mind the implications of the projects in terms of capital expenditure in future years.

For the current financial year, committed expenditure took more than two thirds of the available resources for capital work at voluntary aided schools. Governors' plans for expenditure on projects to start during the year totalled nearly five times the balance of resources available for new work. Meeting the priorities I have outlined therefore used up all the funds available for new work and, in those circumstances, many schools have inevitably had to be disappointed.

A small reserve has been retained to cover those projects which are dependent on statutory proposals, which were awaiting my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's decision when the allocations were announced. No other reserve is held, but, as a normal part of the management of resources, my Department regularly monitors the progress of expenditure on projects at aided schools. If this monitoring shows that understanding is likely, it will enable us to authorise the start of further new projects.

Turning now to St. Saviour's, may I say that I take very seriously the representations made by my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Acton and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and others about the needs of the school. I am in no doubt about the difficulties pupils and staff are facing. I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that our inability to programme the project so far is not the result of pervesity or lack of knowledge about the school's case, but is a difficult decision of the sort that must be taken when what is desirable exceeds what is possible. As my hon. Friend may well be aware, Ealing local education authority has again put forward the project at St. Saviour's for inclusion in the Department's programme of starts for 1988-89.

All authorities' plans are currently under consideration, and allocations for capital expenditure at county and voluntary schools are expected to be announced later this month. My hon. Friend will understand, I am sure, that I am not in a position to give any assurances at this stage about the likelihood of programming the work at St. Saviour's. He will, I know and hope, accept the assurance I can give that the points that he and others have so

[Mr. Robert Dunn]

eloquently made will be taken fully into account before decisions are made. Again I congratulate my hon. Friend on obtaining this Adjournment debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 23 November 1987

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Housing

Mr. Key: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many housing units the Church Commissioners own, lease or rent; and, of these *(a)* how many are currently occupied and *(b)* how many are vacant (i) prior to being let, or repaired or refurbished or (ii) prior to being sold.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners' property investments include 5,607 housing units as follows:

	Number
Occupied	5,478
Vacant prior to being let	39
Vacant prior to sale	90

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Campbell-Savours To ask the Attorney-General what were the costs to public funds of the recent application to the High Court and Appeal Court for a delay in the trial of Attorney-General *v. The Guardian* and *The Observer* in relation to the "Spycatcher" book.

The Attorney-General: The cost to public funds is not yet known.

Mr. Evan Evans

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General for what reason the Director of Public Prosecutions rejected a request by police investigators to examine the bank accounts of Mr. Evan Evans, a defendant in the alleged conspiracy to kidnap leaders of the African National Congress; and if whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman has been misinformed. No such request was made.

Legal Aid

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General what representations the Lord Chancellor has received on the White Paper "Legal Aid in England and Wales: A New Framework"; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 November. The Government have received representations expressing a range of views on the various aspects of its White Paper on legal aid.

Official Secrets Act 1911

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General what criteria are used when deciding whether or not to grant immunity from prosecution under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to persons writing books about the security or intelligence services.

The Attorney-General: My policy in relation to the granting of immunity from prosecution in any case is the same as that of my predecessor. He stated, in a reply of 27 January 1986 to a question from the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), that his policy was to authorise an assurance being given to a witness that he would himself not be prosecuted only if he was satisfied that it was unlikely that the witness would otherwise be willing to give a full and truthful account of what he knew, and that it was necessary, if the true facts were to be established or, as the case may be, if evidence was to be obtained which might permit proceedings to be instituted against others, that the witness should give that account. Such an assurance was always conditional upon his telling the truth. As my predecessor explained, it is often a relevant consideration that there is no prospect of criminal proceedings being instituted against an individual, whatever his own anxieties on that matter, or that there is no evidence against him upon which such proceedings could be founded other than what he himself may say.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General if immunity from prosecution under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 has been granted since 1979 to any author publishing books on the work of the security or intelligence services.

The Attorney-General: No.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will arrange for a complete transcript of the Appeal Court hearing of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings to be placed in the Library.

The Solicitor-General: Arrangements have been made for a full transcript to be placed in the Library following delivery of the Court of Appeal's judgment and reasons.

PRIME MINISTER

Crewe and Nantwich (Visit)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the Crewe and Nantwich constituency with a view to discussing its inclusion in a new list of assisted areas.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. The designation of assisted areas is a matter for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who has no plans, at present, to review coverage of the assisted areas map.

Select Committee on Science and Technology

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 10 November, *Official Report*, columns *161-2*, what steps she is taking to secure the re-establishment of the former Select Committee on Science and Technology; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal to the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 16 November 1987, at column *770*.

Security

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received any representations concerning the implications for security of the publication of "Web of Deceit" by Mr. Chapman Pincher.

The Prime Minister: I take it that the hon. Gentleman is referring to "A Web of Deception" by Chapman Pincher. I have not received any such representations, as far as I am aware.

Business Rate

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if it is now intended that a uniform business rate should be introduced throughout the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 17 November 1987, at column *469*.

Council of Europe

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Prime Minister if she will announce the composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will be meeting in Strasbourg on 25 January 1988. The delegation from the United Kingdom this year will consist of twelve Members of the Conservative party, five Members of the Labour party and one Member of the Liberal party. I have also appointed a number of substitute delegates.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the leaders of those parties concerned.

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the Assembly of the Western European Union, which meets in Paris on 30 November.

Representatives from the Government Benches will be:

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who will act as leader.

My hon. Friends the Members for:
- Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith)
- Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) (Government Whip)
- Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)
- Twickenham (Mr. Jessel)
- Northampton, South (Mr. Morris)
- Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes)
- Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)
- Ashford (Mr. Speed)
- Streatham (Mr. Shelton)
- Medway (Dame P. Fenner)
- and the Earl of Kinnoull.

Representatives from the Labour party will be:

The hon. Members for:
- Neath (Mr. Coleman)
- Wallsend (Mr. Garrett)
- Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)
- Tooting (Mr. Cox)
- Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry).

Representatives from the Liberal party will be:

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates:

From the Government Benches:

My hon. Friends the Members for:
- Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson)
- Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)
- Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell)
- Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)
- Lewes (Mr. Rathbone)
- Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden)
- Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord)
- Lord Newall and Lord Rodney.

From the Labour party:

The hon. Members for:
- Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson)
- Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland)
- Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)
- Warley, East (Mr. Faulds)
- Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock)
- Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing)
- Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie)
- and Lord Kirkhill.

From the Liberal party:

The Lord Mackie.

CIVIL SERVICE

Government forms

109. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made in his Department on the initiative to improve the language, design and relevance of Government forms.

Mr. Luce: Government Departments are making good progress. In the last two years 11,000 forms have been scrapped, and a further 20,000 have been improved. A copy of the latest progress report on this work has been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa (AIDS)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available to the Overseas Development Administration about the spread of HIV infection and AIDS in African countries; what recent requests for United Kingdom aid have been made; and what response the Overseas Development Administration has made to such requests.

Mr. Chris Patten: Accurate information on the spread of HIV infection is not available. The World Health Organisation estimates that for every AIDS case, 50 to 100 people may be infected with the virus. At 11 November 1987, 36 African countries had reported 6,298 cases of AIDS to the WHO.

The WHO is taking the lead in mobilising and co-ordinating external assistance for AIDS control programmes in developing countries. We have so far provided £3·25 million to support its work. In addition, the ODA has recently participated in donor meetings in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and has agreed to assist their national AIDS programmes.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in the *Official Report* details of United Kingdom medical and other assistance to countries in Africa *(a)* to seek to control the spread of AIDS, *(b)* to assist in the treatment of patients suffering from AIDS and *(c)* to assist in the prevention or treatment of other diseases.

Mr. Chris Patten: We believe that support for programmes co-ordinated by the World Health Organisation is the most effective way of helping developing countries to combat AIDS. We have already contributed £3·25 million to the WHO's special programme on AIDS, which is working with 44 African countries. In addition, we have pledged bilateral support for WHO-co-ordinated AIDS control programmes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Some equipment, training and information materials have been supplied elsewhere in Africa.

In the absence of a vaccine or a cure for the disease, information and education programmes offer the best hope of limiting the spread of the infection. In recognition of this, Her Majesty's Government and the WHO are holding a world summit of Ministers of Health on programmes for AIDS prevention in London in January 1988. We are sponsoring a number of African delegates to the summit. We are also providing £1·6 million to the International Planned Parenthood Federation to help provide its educational materials on AIDS; Africa is a priority for this work.

The ODA spends about £38 million a year on health and population programmes designed to strenthen health services in developing countries. The provision of manpower is a key element in our health assistance programmes in Africa. In 1986 we supported over 100 doctors, nurses and other health workers in the region.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Pakistan (Enriched Uranium Capacity)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has received from Mr. Richard Kennedy, President Reagan's ambassador-at-large on non-proliferation, on Pakistan's enriched uranium capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have had no recent communication from Ambassador Kennedy on this subject.

Racial Discrimination (Entry Clearance Officers)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures exist for the investigation of complaints of racial discrimination, including cultural discrimination, on the part of entry clearance officers.

Mr. Eggar: Any complaint of any nature about the conduct of staff overseas is fully investigated at senior management level appropriate to the seriousness of the allegation. If necessary, the head of post himself will undertake the investigation and report to London.

EEC (Sugar Quotas)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's position regarding the imminent negotiations on sugar quotas to the EEC.

Mrs. Chalker: On 22 October the Commission opened negotiations with the ACP on the guaranteed prices to apply to cane sugar deliveries from the ACP states listed in Protocol 7 annexed to the third ACP/EEC (Lomé) Convention during the 1987-88 delivery period. The Commission is negotiating on the basis of a mandate agreed by all member states, including the United Kingdom.

Chine Kit (Hong Kong Futures Exchange)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his replies of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns 16-17, why the firm Chine Kit was suspended from trading on the Hong Kong futures exchange; whether any of the staff or officials of the Hong Kong futures exchange or the Hong Kong stock exchange have any connection with any of the 33 firms currently being sued by the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation; whether these firms have been suspended from trading on the Hong Kong stock exchange; and what interest Mr. Ronald Li has in the firm Chine Kit.

Mr. Eggar: Chine Kit Ltd. was suspended from trading on 27 October because it had failed to pay margin calls. The company subsequently paid the calls and was reinstated on 29 October. We are not aware that any staff of the futures exchange or the stock exchange are connected with any of the 32 firms being sued by the Hong Kong Futures Corporation. None of these firms has been suspended from trading on the Hong Kong stock exchange. The Hong Kong companies registry records that Chine Kit Ltd. has a paid-up share capital of 2,000,000 HK$1 shares, of which 1,999,997 are held by Mr. Ronald Li.

Malaysia (Cecilia Ng Choon Sim)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will protest to the Malaysian Government about the detention without trial of many Government critics and in particular about the arrest of women's rights campaigner Cecilia Ng Choon Sim; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Malaysian Prime Minister has stated that the recent detentions were necessary in a situation of increased ethnic tension to prevent a slide into public disorder. We hope that circumstances will soon permit the release of those detained.

Cambodia (Peace Negotiations)

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to support the initiative by Prince Sihanouk of the Democratic Kampuchean Coalition and Hun Sen of the Government in Phnomn Penh in Paris in December to begin the process of negotiating for peace.

Mr. Eggar: We welcome any moves which lead to genuine progress towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Cambodia, consistent with our long-held wish to see the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and freedom for the Cambodian people to determine their own future.

EMPLOYMENT

Shop Stewards

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether time off in lieu is available to shop stewards undertaking training courses at Government expense; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Section 27 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, which provides for time off for employees who are trade union officials to receive training relevant to their duties, does not differentiate between officials whose training is assisted by Government grant and officials who receive assistance from other sources.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will publish figures for unemployment in Southwark and Bermondsey constituency expressed as a percentage of the percentage rate of unemployment in Great Britain for each year since 1983;

(2) which parliamentary constituencies in England had a higher percentage rate of unemployment than Southwark and Bermondsey for each year since 1983.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary constituencies in England have had *(a)* an increase or *(b)* a smaller percentage decrease in unemployment than Southwark and Bermondsey over (i) the past three years (ii) the past two years and (iii) the past year.

Mr. Lee: The following information is available from the Library. On 8 October 1987 the numbers of parliamentary constituencies in England where the unemployment figures show an increase or a smaller percentage decrease in unemployment than the Southwark and Bermondsey constituency over the past three years, two years and one year were 14, 54 and 58 respectively.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in employment in manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, Scotland and Wales since 1979; and what information he has as to comparable figures in other manufacturing countries.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1979 and June 1987 (the latest date for which comparable figures are available) the percentage changes in the numbers of employees in the manufacturing industries for the areas specified are as follows:

	Percentage change
United Kingdom	−29
Scotland	−34
Wales	−34

Some of the decrease in the figures will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, computer services, and road haulage, previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by sub-contractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

Annual average figures for other manufacturing countries have been published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the latest available are for 1985. In the period 1979 to 1985, the percentage changes in the numbers of employees in the manufacturing industries of six principal countries are as follows:

	Percentage change
United States	−8
Canada	−5
Japan	9
France	−14
Germany	−9
Italy	−10

The shift in employment from manufacturing to service industries is happening in most other developed industrial nations. Manufacturing employment expressed as a percentage of all employees in the United Kingdom in 1985 was higher than in Canada or the United States.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to decide whether he will publish his review of student financial support.

Mr. Jackson: The Government hope to publish proposals for consideration in the first half of next year.

Miss Sharon McGleave

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) why the qualifications of Miss Sharon McGleave, BA, (Hons), MA, PGCE, have not yet been recognised as teaching qualifications by his Department;

(2) on what date he received copies of O-Level English language and mathematics certificates from Miss Sharon McGleave, presently employed as a teacher in St. Thomas More upper school, Bedford; and on what date he requested these copies;

(3) how many times his Department sought from Queen's University, Belfast, verification of the teacher training qualifications of Miss Sharon McGleave, presently employed as a teacher in St. Thomas More upper school, Bedford; how many times such information was received; and what was the nature of that information.

Mrs. Rumbold: Applications for qualified teacher status from people trained outside of England and Wales are considered initially under paragraph 2(b) of schedule 5 to the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982. To be acceptable, the course of initial teacher training pursued must be comparable to one available in England and Wales at the same time. In respect of courses completed after 1 September 1984, the applicant must also have attained the standard in English and mathematics required to obtain grade C at GCE O-level. Confirmation of Miss McGleave's training and qualifications were sought from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland on 10

September. A response was received on 6 October. At the same time, information, which had been requested direct by Miss McGleave, was received from Queen's University, Belfast. As the responses did not make clear that she met the mathematics requirement, Miss McGleave was asked on 22 October to provide copies of her GCE O-level certificates. These were received on 4 November and Miss McGleave was notified on 20 November that she is a qualified teacher in England and Wales.

Education Reform

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received about the future teaching of home economics in relation to the proposed national curriculum; and what was the nature of those representations.

Mrs. Rumbold: By 13 November some 8,500 individuals and organisations had responded to the Government's consultation document on the national curriculum. These representations have covered, among other issues, the place of home economics in the national curriculum. Respondents have expressed concern about the time available for home economics and its status as a subject within the national curriculum. In addition to these written representations, I have held a meeting with the United Kingdom Home Economics Federation, which expressed the same concern.

Seismic Movements

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Offical Report* the levels of seismic movements which have occurred in each Scottish region in the past 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: Seismographs operated by the British Geological Survey have detected and located natural and mining-induced earthquakes in the past 10 years as follows:

Region	*Number of earthquakes located*	*Number of earthquakes with Richter magnitude of 2 or more*
Borders	50	1
Central	182	9
Dumfries and Galloway	37	5
Fife	51	0
Grampian	3	0
Highland	193	48
Lothian	871	7
Orkney	0	0
Shetland	1	0
Strathclyde	118	18
Tayside	45	3
Western Isles	0	0
Total	1,551	91

Earthquakes that have a Richter magnitude of 2 or more can often be felt; seismic movements below this level are not usually noticeable.

The distribution of seismograph stations has varied in recent years, and with it the ability to detect and locate seismic events. Prior to 1980 only one seismograph was operated north of Dundee on the Scottish mainland.

Shop Stewards

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give a breakdown by age of the numbers of people attending shop steward training coures in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about the incidence of *(a)* Trade Union Congress regional education officers being asked to advise upon the selection of candidates for tutors on shop steward training courses which are government-funded and *(b)* Trade Union Congress personnel sitting on the interview or selection panel for such vacancies;

(3) if he will give a breakdown by subject of the numbers of shop stewards undertaking training courses at Government expense; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will estimate the total number of working days lost due to shop stewards' attendances at Government-funded training courses in any one year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available to my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether colleagues participating in Government-funded courses for shop stewards are required to provide a balanced curriculum and system of visiting speakers: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The memorandum of arrangements governing Government funded trade union education and training courses specifies in detail the subject areas which eligible courses must cover. It also requires the Trades Union Congress to seek departmental approval of any proposals for additions or amendments to the content of courses. A system of visiting speakers is not specified.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make it his policy to phase out the grant currently paid to the Trade Union Congress for the training of shop stewards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: A decision on continuation of the grant to the Trades Union Congress is taken annually by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and Employment. They determined earlier this year that the grant should continue for the financial year 1987-88.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total level of Government grant paid to the trade Union Congress in each of the last five years for which figures are available for the cost of training courses for shop stewards; and what is the purpose for which this is intended.

Mr. Jackson: Total grant paid to the Trades Union Congress in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£
1982-83	1,598,570
1983-84	1,545,725
1984-85	1,542,239
1985-86	1,695,510
1986-87	1,704,000

Public funding, introduced in 1976, is intended to enhance the quantity and quality of education and training of trades union representatives, and so to gain a better informed work force and improved industrial relations.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many shop stewards have undertaken training courses at Government expense in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Jackson: This question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied that the fees charged by colleges for running shop steward training courses cover the cost of those courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The fees charged by colleges for running shop steward training courses are a matter between the colleges and the trade unions. They are not directly related to the Government's rate of grant.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there is a requirement for colleges undertaking shop steward training courses at Government expense to have their subject matter approved first by the Trades Union Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The memorandum of arrangements governing Government funded trade union education and training courses specifies in detail the subject areas which eligible courses must cover. This includes democracy at work; the role of members and representatives in industrial relations, including negotiation and consultation; health and safety issues; and the importance of economic realities in the functioning of industry and commerce. The Government expect the Trades Union Congress to ensure that the courses funded meet the requirements of the memorandum of arrangements.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the use of Government-funded shop steward training courses to promote the unionisation of school children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Government funding is made available to unions affiliated to the Trade Union Congress or registered as non-affiliated trade unions for the education and training of representatives of these unions. It is not available for the promotion of trade union activities. If my hon. Friend has information that such funds are being used to promote the unionisation of school children, my right hon. Friend would be concerned to know about it.

WALES

M4 (Traffic Flow)

66. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by section the latest traffic flow figures for those sections of the M4 for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest week day 12-hour—7 am to 7 pm—traffic flow figures and date counted for all sections of the M4 motorway in Wales are as follows:

Motorway section	*Traffic flow*	*Date of count*
Jn. 22 Newhouse—Jn. 23 Magor	29,900	November 1987
Jn. 23 Magor—Jn. 24 Coldra	25,800	September 1982
Jn. 24 Coldra—Jn. 25 Caerleon	43,900	September 1986
Jn. 25 Caerleon—Jn. 26 Malpas	57,300	November 1987
Jn. 26 Malpas—Jn. 27 High Cross	42,600	June 1984
Jn. 27 High Cross—Jn. 28 Tredegar Park	45,000	May 1985
Jn. 28 Tredgegar Park—Jn. 29 Castleton	53,100	September 1987
Jn. 29 Castleton—Jn. 32 Coryton	27,700	September 1987
Jn. 32 Coryton—Jn. 33 Capel Llaniltern	32,500	September 1985 —September 1987
Jn. 33 Capel Llaniltern—Jn. 34 Miskin	39,700	
Jn. 34 Miskin—Jn. 35 Pencoed	30,500	September 1986
Jn. 35 Pencoed—Jn. 36 Sarn	21,200	October 1984
Jn. 36 Sarn—Jn. 37 Pyle	24,100	October 1987
Jn. 37 Pyle—Jn. 38 Margam	24,200	September 1985
Jn. 38 Margam—Jn. 39 Groes	24,500	November 1987
Jn. 39 Groes—Jn. 40 Taibach	27,400	November 1987
Jn. 40 Taibach—Jn. 41 Pentyla	28,200	November 1987
Jn. 41 Pentyla—Jn. 41A Baglan	31,800	October 1987
Jn. 44 Lonlas—Jn. 45 Ynysforgan	21,800	September 1987
Jn. 45 Ynysforgan—Jn. 46 Llangyfelach	21,200	October 1987
Jn. 46 Llangyfelach—Jn. 47 Penllergaer	18,500	April 1985
Jn. 47 Penllergaer—Jn. 48 Hendy	21,000	September 1986
Jn. 48 Hendy—Jn. 49 Pont Abraham	15,400	October 1986

Speech Therapy Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to promote the setting up of speech therapy training in *(a)* north Wales, *(b)* south-east Wales and *(c)* south-west Wales; what moneys he will make available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education currently provides a four-year degree course in speech therapy. The institute attracts students from all parts of Wales and offers opportunities for training through the medium of English and Welsh. The Department is currently undertaking a review of the future requirements for and implications for the provision of speech therapists and other staff disciplines in the context of a manpower resource planning exercise for the NHS in Wales.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many small firms loan guarantee schemes exist in Clwyd and in the Deeside travel-to-work area.

Mr. Peter Walker: Responsibility for the loan guarantee scheme rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. To date, 832 loans, totalling £26·12 million have been guaranteed under the scheme in Wales. Information on individual local authority and travel-to-work areas would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many enterprise allowance schemes are operative in *(a)* Clwyd county and *(b)* the Deeside travel-to-work area; and will he make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of enterprise allowance schemes operative on 10 November 1987 in the counties

of Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys is 1,812. Figures for smaller areas can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Collieries (Derelict Land)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by when he expects all significant colliery derelict land to be removed in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Current projections suggest that existing dereliction at colliery sites is on course to be cleared substantially by the late 1990s. It should be possible to refine this estimate when the results of the 1988 derelict land survey are available.

Jobcentres

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many vacancies have been notified at the Milford Haven and Haverfordwest job centres for work on trawlers since 1 January 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not available.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sheep have been monitored for radioactivity in each month since 1 September 1986 in each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is set out in the table. No sheep were monitored in Gwent, Mid, South or West Glamorgan.

Numbers of Sheep monitored for radioactivity from 1 September 1986 to 31 October 1987 in Wales

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwynedd*	*Powys*
1986				
September	30	Nil	460	26
October	12	Nil	2,540	60
November	Nil	Nil	3,990	816
December	Nil	80	4,201	1,325
1987				
January	7,594	1,365	12,979	862
February	1,624	170	3,458	351
March	126	Nil	329	Nil
April	Nil	Nil	585	100
May	20	Nil	2,304	113
June	140	Nil	4,321	138
July	270	Nil	17,295	487
August	260	Nil	50,399	718
September	971	Nil	71,863	3,451
October	576	267	20,840	1,180

TRADE AND INDUSTRY°

HOTOL

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received in the past month concerning the HOTOL project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Some 31 representations have been received in the past month. The Government have funded a two-year proof of concept study on HOTOL with the costs being shared on a 50:50 basis between Government and industry. This study by British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce is now nearing completion. The companies involved have agreed to continue working at their own expense while discussions take place to determine the next steps.

Space Research

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on current levels of funding for United Kingdom space research.

Mr. Butcher: The total public expenditure provision for 1987-88 for civil space research and development is £112 million, including some £75 million which is expected to be spent through the European Space Agency.

Falkland Islands (Post)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what action he is taking to improve postal deliveries from Britain to civilians working in the Falkland Islands;

(2) what representations he has received on the time taken to make postal deliveries from Britain to civilians working in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Butcher: This is a matter for the Post Office. A petition received last month by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister from the civilian work force at Mount Pleasant airfield about their deliveries of mail from Britain has been forwarded to the Post Office, which I understand is looking into the matter.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total deficit of the United Kingdom in manufacturing trade on the overseas trade statistics basis in the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available and what percentage of the total was in respect of trade with the European Economic Community.

Mr. Butcher: In the 12 months to September the deficit on our trade in manufactures was £10·8 billion with the other members of the Community and £9·5 billion overall. Forty six per cent. of our exports and 56 per cent. of our imports are with the Community.

Ship Radio Licences

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who he proposes will check on the display of ship radio (VHF) licences; and how this enforcement will be funded.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's radio investigation service is responsible for inspecting ships' radio licences. This work is funded from licence fees.

Tariffs

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what tariff or non-tariff restrictions there are on imports into the United Kingdom of (i) instant coffee, (ii) tobacco, (iii) cocoa butter, (iv) margarine made from soyoil and (v) other processed agricultural products from *(a)* Commonwealth and *(b)* non-Commonwealth developing countries; what is the

purpose of these restrictions; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government or the European Commission have made to revise or abolish them.

Mr. Butcher: There are no specific non-tariff restrictions on imports into the United Kingdom of the products listed. Imports from all sources into the European Community are subject to the appropriate levels of duty laid down in the common customs tariff of the Community. A copy of the tariff is available in the Library of the House.

International trade in agricultural products, processed or otherwise, if one of the topics for discussion in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, when existing tariffs and equivalent measures will be subject to review. The Community has already put forward negotiating proposals designed to improve market access for tropical products.

Furniture (Safety)

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit the advertisement, sale, importation or manufacture of furniture made of those materials which are inherently dangerous; and if he will make a statement; (2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation for the permanent display of a safety classification system on furniture, in a form easily understandable by consumers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 6 November I promised a statement in December about responses to consultation on the code of practice for upholstered furniture. The points raised in the two questions will be covered by that statement and in more detail by the draft regulations which I shall circulate for consultation as soon as possible in the new year.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

3. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss electricity privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet Lord Marshall, the chairman of the CEGB, regularly to discuss our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

53. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what priority he is giving to consumer protection in his proposals for electricity privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: The protection of consumers' rights is being given a very high priority in the development of my proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. I am committed to ensuring that the rights of the consumer are safeguarded in the privatised industry.

Gas and Electricity Disconnections

6. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the number of gas disconnections in each of the last three years; and what was the percentage change for each year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Disconnections are a matter for the gas and electricity industries and I have asked the chairman of British Gas plc and of the Electricity Council to ensure that the hon. Members have the information requested.

9. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many disconnections of gas and electricity supply have been made in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Disconnections are a matter for the gas and electricity industries and I have asked the chairmen of British Gas plc and of the Electricity Council to ensure that the hon. Members have the information requested.

CEGB (Financial Framework)

14. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the financial framework of the board.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board frequently to discuss a range of issues.

Combined Heat and Power

17. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had discussions with local authorities about the operation of combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I recently met members and officials of Sheffield city council at the launch of Sheffield Heat and Power Ltd. This company is responsible for implementing a new district heating scheme in that city. I am also planning to visit Leicester CHP next week.

52. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the Combined Heat and Power Association to discuss the promotion of combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have no immediate plans to do so. However, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State expects to meet this group in the near future.

British Coal

19. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of British Coal at regular intervals to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

28. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and if he will make a statement on the subjects discussed.

38. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal at regular intervals to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Electricity Supply Industry

20. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the level of staff costs in the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: The Electricity Council's annual report for 1986-87 shows that total staff costs amounted to £1,958·7 million.

26. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many of his Department's staff are currently working on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: There are currently 21 members of my Department working specifically on the proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. This figure includes clerical and secretarial staff.

27. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what increase in income he estimates the electricity supply industry will enjoy in the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 as a result of the recent price increases announcement.

Mr. Parkinson: The electricity supply industry's external financing limit for 1988-89, which represents the industry's net cash income after capital expenditure, is for a repayment of £1,040 million. The net effect, taking account of a higher level of capital expenditure and payment of tax, is £163 million lower than the corresponding figure for 1987-88 and is consistent with the increase in the industry's financial target. It is not the Government's practice to publish these forecasts for more than one year ahead.

33. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about his proposals for privatising the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I have received representations from electricity consumers, unions, other nationalised industries and other interested parties and will take these into account when considering proposals for the privatisation of the industry.

36. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any representations from the public proposing differential solutions for the various segments of the industry arising from the preparations to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I have received representations from the public proposing a range of options for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. I shall take these views into account when drawing up plans for privatisation.

42. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest timetable for the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I am developing proposals and work is proceeding on time. Decisions have not been taken and it would be premature to announce a timetable. However, I anticipate putting details of our proposals to Parliament in the first part of next year.

43. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the implications for nuclear power of the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has received representations from electricity consumers, unions, other nationalised industries and other interested parties about a wide range of issues related to the proposed privatisation of the electricity supply industry, including the implications for nuclear power. He will take these views into account when drawing up proposals for the industry.

45. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current rate of return on investment for the electricity supply inustry; and what is the proposed rate of return for the industry for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: The present financial target is an average rate of return of 2·75 per cent. on net assets, calculated on a current cost accounting basis, over the three years 1985-86 to 1987-88. In the last financial year, 1986-87, the return achieved was 3·17 per cent. In order to achieve the financial target, the industry is aiming for a return in 1987-88 of 2·45 per cent. In my statement to the House on 3 November, I said that the Government and electricity supply industry had agreed financial targets of 3·75 per cent. in 1988-89 and 4·75 per cent. in 1989-90.

48. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the projected level of investment in the electricity supply industry to the year 2000.

Mr. Parkinson: Investment to replace aging capacity and to meet new demand is essential if the electricity industry is to continue to provide customers with a reliable and efficient system of supply. On current forecasts of demand the CEGB envisages that up to 13 gigawatts of new capacity may be needed by the end of the century. Demand forecasts are of course kept under review and, within this framework, orders for individual new power stations will be placed on their merits.

The figure of £45 billion, which is at estimated outturn prices, derives from estimates prepared by the electricity supply industry. It indicates the scale of expenditure that may be required to meet the demand forecasts in full. On the same basis, the figure also includes substantial investment in the national grid and in other existing assets, together with investment in new capacity which may be under construction by the end of the century but not commissioned by then.

Investment on this scale will provide substantial opportunities for British industry to win orders and expand business.

50. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be able to announce the vesting date for the privatised electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) earlier today.

61. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from the electricity supply industry about the method of privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the senior management of the electricity supply industry to discuss our proposals for the privatisation of the industry. I shall take their views into account before making any decisions.

65. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current rate of return on capital in the

electricity supply industries in the several member states of the European Economic Community; and what is his estimate of the rate of return on capital in the United Kingdom's electricity supply industry in 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: It is not possible to make a direct comparison of rates of return in different countries, due to substantial differences in accounting practices. The financial target for the ESI in England and Wales is for a current cost rate of return of 3·75 per cent. on net assets in 1988-89.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the ratio of capital debt to income in the electricity supply industry in each year since 1975.

Mr. Parkinson: The ratio of long-term borrowings at 31 March to turnover for the year then ended in the electricity supply industry in each year since 1975 has been as follows:

Year	
1975	1·94
1976	1·58
1977	1·35
1978	1·08
1979	0·97
1980	0·86
1981	0·73
1982	0·58
1983	0·50
1984	0·42
1985	0·33
1986	0·38
1987	0·29

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the income derived from an average rate of return for the electricity supply industry of *(a)* 2·45 per cent. *(b)* 3·75 per cent. and *(c)* 4·75 per cent.

Mr. Parkinson: These figures represent the electricity supply industry's expected rates of return in the three years to 1989-90. I therefore refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the similar question by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on 23 November 1987.

Supply Policy

21. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what priority he accords to diversity of supply in determining the Government's energy policy.

Mr. Parkinson: I can confirm that encouraging diversity of supply is a key element in the Government's energy policy.

Coal Industry (Productivity)

22. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest figures for productivity in the coal industry; and what were the comparable figures 10 years ago.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the week ending 31 October, average deep mined revenue output per man shift was 3·72 tonnes, an increase of some 70 per cent. on the average of 2·19 tonnes for 1977-78.

Opencast Sector

23. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of the opencast coal sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Opencast coal is one of the cheapest forms of energy available to this country. It is not for Government to set targets, but it is clearly in the national interest to maximise production where that can be done in an environmentally acceptable way. I therefore welcome British Coal's plans to increase opencast production above its present levels where possible.

There is inevitably concern about the impact of opencast mining on the environment. British Coal share that concern and its restoration techniques and its techniques for minimising disturbance while mining takes place are second to none. I would hope that those who oppose opencast mining would look carefully at what British Coal has achieved.

Opencast coal is also important for British Coal's deep mines. It enables some deep mine production, which would otherwise be unsaleable, to be made acceptable to customers; and it generates profits which can be used to finance investment in improving deep mine productivity.

Electricity Requirements

24. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to publish estimates of future electricity requirements for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Parkinson: Estimates of future electricity requirements are the responsibility of the electricity supply industry. The Electricity Council publish adopted load forecasts for England and Wales each year.

British Coal Enterprise

25. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created in the east Midlands with the help of British Coal Enterprise.

Mr. Michael Spicer: By the end of October British Coal Enterprise Ltd. had helped create a total of 1,524 job opportunities in its midlands region. I regret that sub-regional figures ae not available.

Electricity Prices

29. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much he envisages electricity prices having to rise in 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: The increase for 1989-90 will be a matter for the electricity industry to decide, in the light of the financial target it has agreed with the Government. It is too early to say what such an increase might be, but it is likely to be significantly less than that for 1988-89.

34. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received protesting at the impact of increased electricity prices upon pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has received representations from pensioners' organisations and is making arrangements for a discussion.

46. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the average price of

electricity in England and Wales compared with France, West Germany, Japan and the United States of America expressed as pence per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In its latest "International Comparison of Electricity prices" the Electricity Council calculated the average price of electricity in 1985-86 at 4·78p/kWh in France, 6·18p/kWh in West Germany, 10·51p/kWh in Japan and 6·08p/kWh in the United States of America. The average price in England and Wales was 4·65p/kWh.

56. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from industry about the proposed increase in electricity prices.

Mr. Parkinson: Most of the representations I have received from industry have been based on premature speculation about the effect of the increase in electricity prices on industrial tariffs. Tariffs for individual classes of consumer are a matter for the electricity industry to decide, but rises in industrial prices are not expected to be significantly higher than the overall average.

63. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the intended levels of consumer electricity prices upon privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: Privatisation, by introducing competition and increasing efficiency, will have a beneficial effect on prices.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to discuss the proposed increases in electricity prices with pensioners' organisations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) today.

Continental Shelf (Orders)

30. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review his Department's statistical analysis so that United Kingdom oil companies are differentiated from companies with United Kingdom offices in the published tables of orders placed on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

CEGB (Reorganisation)

31. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the recent structural reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The reorganisation of the CEGB into a two-tier management structure was completed in April and I have not had cause to discuss it with the chairman.

Fuel Prices

32. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much *(a)* electricity, *(b)* gas and *(c)* coal prices have increased since June 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: The percentage movement in the average price of each fuel to the domestic and industrial sectors between June 1979 and June 1987 was as follows:

	[4]*Domestic*		[5]*Industrial*	
	Real	*Nominal*	*Real*	*Nominal*
Electricity	+5·0	+92·3	[2]−9·5	[2]+66·8
Gas	+21·7	+123·1	[3]−8·3	[3]+68·9
Coal	+10·0	[1]+101·6	−5·6	+74·0

Notes:
[1] Includes coke.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Estimated.
[4] Per cent. change in average price between months of June 1979 and October 1987.
[5] Per cent. change in average price between quarters ending June 1979 and June 1987.

The figures are derived from data published or to be published in "Energy Trends" and the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics". The period covered for the industrial sector is to the end of the second quarter of 1987: the latest period for which dates is available.

Conservation Policies

35. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for the improvement of conservation policies.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I recently announced a review of the work of the Energy Efficiency Office to assess strategic options for the future. I hope to consider that assessment by the end of the year.

Electricity (Nuclear Generation)

37. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the returns on capital investment in electricity generated by nuclear power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electricity supply industry is required to earn a 5 per cent. real rate of return on its new investment programme as a whole. The rate of return on each new generating project must reflect this requirement.

Wind Power

39. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for the further development of wind power following his recent visit to Orkney.

Mr. Parkinson: Following my recent visit to Orkney on 10 November to inaugurate the 3 MW, 60 metre diameter wind turbine generator, my Department will continue to press ahead with its research and development programme on wind energy which is intended to provide a basis for commercial exploitation of this renewable resource by the late 1990s.

The programme will include extensive monitoring of the experimental Orkney machine as well as support for the design and construction of a 55 metre diameter 1 MW wind turbine generator to be erected at the CEGB's Richborough site in Kent. This machine is being designed and built by James Howden & Co. of Glasgow; the project costs are shared between my Department, the CEGB and the European Community.

Gas-gathering Systems

40. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on future gas-gathering systems in the United Kingdom sector of the continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have received no formal proposals for new projects, although I understand that a number of gas-gathering schemes for the central North sea are under preparation by the oil companies and others. I will give careful consideration to any such scheme which are put forward with the objective of ensuring the full development of our gas reserves without delay and without unnecessary duplication of infrastructure.

Energy Efficiency (Government Departments)

41. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action he is taking to encourage energy efficiency in Government Departments' buildings.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The permanent secretaries in charge of Departments have recently agreed to set up an energy management panel for the civil estate to advise them on consumption trends and action needed to ensure that cost-effective improvements in energy efficiency are made. The panel is actively supported by the Energy Efficiency Office and the Property Services Agency. I shall be taking a close interest in its progress.

Bradwell Power Station

44. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by what date the Central Electricity Generating Board expects to implement the recommendations of the nuclear installations inspectorate in relation to the safety of Bradwell power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 29 October 1987, at column 374.

CEGB (Generation Monopoly)

47. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be in a position to announce whether the Central Electricity Generating Board will retain its monopoly of electricity generation after privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: I am developing proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; no decisions on the future structure have been taken. However, I have said that the electricity supply industry will not be privatised as a monolith. I intend to introduce as much competition as possible into the industry and am looking at the scope for so doing.

Norwegian Gas Imports

49. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the impact of renewed plans to import Norwegian gas on the pace of United Kingdom continental shelf gas development and related industrial activity.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am not aware of any plan for new imports of Norwegian gas. The oil companies are being outstandingly successful in finding and developing new United Kingdom reserves. By bringing new United Kingdom gas supplies to the market without delay and on competitive terms the oil companies working on our continental shelf are strengthening their position in the home market and providing important opportunities for the offshore supplies industry.

Electricity Industry

51. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated value of the publicly owned electricity industry *(a)* using current cost methods and *(b)* using historic cost methods.

Mr. Parkinson: The net assets employed by the electricity supply industry—England and Wales—as at 31 March 1987 were £37 billion on a current cost accounting basis and £14 billion on a historical cost basis. These figures do not necessarily represent the valuation which will be placed on the industry by the market.

Renewable Energy Sources

54. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to publish an estimate of the potential for electricity generation by renewable energy sources.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A detailed assessment of the potential for electricity generation by renewable energy sources has recently been undertaken by the chief scientist's group at the Energy Technology Support Unit as part of a comprehensive appraisal of United Kingdom energy research, development and demonstration. This appraisal of a wide range of different energy technologies considered to be relevant for the United Kingdom was published in July as energy paper 54. The background papers prepared by ETSU for this study have also been published as ETSU R43: these contain estimates of both the technical potential and the potential contribution for all renewable technologies. Copies of both publications are in the Libraries of the House.

As I said in the House on 30 October, as reported at column 623, we are currently preparing detailed strategy papers for each of the renewable technologies currently in our programme. These will be published next year and will incorporate any appropriate revisions to earlier assessments of potential contribution from the renewable technologies. Copies of these papers will also be placed in the Library of the House.

Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union

55. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the general secretary of the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I have met the general secretary on a number of occasions since I took office. A range of issues have been discussed.

Coal Supply Contract

57. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about progress on reviewing the financial contract between British Coal and the Central Electricity Generation Board in preparation for the lapse of the present coal supply contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the industries are considering continuing the present agreement covering the supply of coal—which was firm for the first two of its five years—for a further year. No final agreement has yet been reached.

Electricity Generation and Supply Industries

58. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has recently discussed the future of the electricity generation and supply industries with the Electricity Council.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. I meet Sir Philip Jones regularly.

Energy Industries (Competition)

59. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to improve competition in the energy industries.

Mr. Parkinson: I shall continue to seek practicable means of stimulating competition in the energy sector. The creation of greater competition is a major element in the proposals I am developing for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Energy Efficiency Review

60. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made with the energy efficiency review.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) earlier today.

Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations

62. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next plans to meet the chief inspector of nuclear installations.

Mr. Parkinson: I met the chief inspector of nuclear installations in October and I have arranged to keep in close touch.

Gas Explosions

64. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how many gas explosions there have been in the last eight years; how many deaths and how many injuries have been sustained; how many claims against British Gas have been made as a result; and how many are still outstanding.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for British Gas plc. I have written to the chairman of British Gas, asking him to reply to the hon. Member.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he had with trade union representatives of the people working in the electricity sector.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend met the Electricity Supply Trades Union Council on 1 October and has also had meetings with individual union representatives to discuss a range of issues. Further meetings are planned.

Sellafield

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 2 November, column *533*, he will set out the reasons why he will not publish weekly records, backdated to 1 January, of the throughput nuclear materials on the Windscale B 205 Magnox reprocessing line.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 21 October 1987, at column 750.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he has given to the effects on the Central Electricity Generating Board participation in Nirex of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The participation in Nirex by the successor company or companies of the Central Electricity Generating Board will depend on decisions about the future structure of the electricity supply industry, which have yet to be taken.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Divis Flats

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to ensure adequate provision for community and educational facilities in the redevelopment of the Divis flats complex in Belfast.

Dr. Mawhinney: A long-term development plan for the rationalisation and improvement of primary school facilities in the Divis flats area has been approved by the Department of Education involving the amalgamation and replacement of St. Finian's boys' and St. Vincent's girls' primary schools by a new co-educational primary school; the amalgamation of St. Joseph's boys' and girls' primary schools, Slate street, and the provision of improved facilities; and a review of the provision at St. Comgall's boys' and girls' primary schools, Divis street, in the light of demographic trends.

Additionally, one new 50-place nursery school was opened in November 1986 and a further one is planned.

The complex has adequate provision in terms of secondary school facilities and there are no plans to replace the existing Divis flats community centre.

Community Initiatives

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which body within his responsibility is responsible for funding community initiatives on planning and design matters in Northern Ireland; and if he will list those organisations in receipt of such funding.

Mr. Needham: No single body is charged with funding community initiatives on planning and design matters in Northern Ireland. Community and voluntary organisations can make use of a number of existing schemes or sources of support, which have a more general application, to finance planning and design work in relation to buildings or the environment. In addition the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland pays grant each year to community technical aid (Northern Ireland) which was established as an environmental technical aid service to provide the community with development and environmental technical aid skills.

Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what programme of special measures in the policing field were identified as mentioned in paragraph 3.2 of the joint statement of the Anglo-Irish Conference of 11 March 1986; and if he will list for each subject contained in the list of cross-border social and economic co-operation appended to the joint statement of 11 March 1986 the meetings which have taken place and the agencies and numbers of officials involved.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: As I said in reply to a question from the hon. Gentleman on 29 June, it has not been our practice to make public details of discussions in the conference, beyond what appears in the joint statements issued after conference meetings which I have placed in the Library. However, as statements covering a number of meetings held after 11 March 1986 record, the two sides have continued to work together on a programme of special measures to improve relations between the security forces and the community.

The information the hon. Gentleman seeks about meetings on cross-border social and economic co-operation is not kept centrally and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. Meetings have been held in some of these fields over many years.

I and my colleagues remain ready to discuss with the hon. Gentleman, and other elected representatives of constitutional parties, Government policy on these and other matters.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the programme of work which has been established to consider the machinery for the further discussion of legal matters, including the administration of justice, which is mentioned in the joint statement issued following the first meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 11 December 1985.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: As joint statements issued after later meetings of the conference make clear, groups of officials were set up to discuss extradition, the possible harmonisation of areas of the criminal law and the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice. They have reported to the conference from time to time.

Commercial Explosive

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of commercial explosive recovered in Ulster during 1985, 1986 and 1987 to date can be traced back to the Republic of Ireland; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 12 November at column *315*.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many prisoners Maghaberry prison was built to accommodate; and how many it houses;

(2) what role Maghaberry prison was planned to fill; and if he will make a statement about its present and future use.

Mr. Stanley: There are two prisons on the same site at Maghaberry, one for women and one for men. The former was built to house all the female prisoners and young offenders in Northern Ireland. It has been fully operational since March 1986 and will continue to be used to hold female inmates, both those sentenced and those on remand. It was designed to accommodate 56 inmates and currently holds 39, who represent the total number of female prisoners in Northern Ireland.

The men's prison on the same site was planned to provide accommodation for convicted prisoners of all types and security categories. A gradual build-up of the population has started and it is intended to include a range of short and long-term prisoners. It was built to accommodate 432 inmates and currently houses 38. It is anticipated that the prison will have around 100 inmates by mid-February 1988 with the build-up continuing thereafter.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Gyrodactylus Salaris

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions his Department has had with the Irish authorities about precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the salmon disease gyrodactylus salaris.

Mr. Gummer: Scientists of my Department and of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland are in touch with officials in the Republic of Ireland and I understand there is no evidence of the parasite gyrodactylus salaris in salmon stocks there. The Republic continues to operate very strict health certification and licensing controls in respect of imports of live salmonids and salmonid ova. The prohibition on imports of live salmonid fish into Great Britain, to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend on 16 November at column 431 applies to imports from the Irish Republic as to other countries.

Sugar Industry

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how Her Majesty's Government intend to safeguard the employment prospects of employees in the sugar industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are seeking to ensure that the interests of the United Kingdom sugar industry are fully protected in the current review of the Community's sugar regime in the Council of Ministers. We are also pressing for measures to place the cane refining margin on a more satisfactory basis.

Crabs

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Scottish-based boats fishing in Northumberland waters will be bound by the proposed increase in the minimum landing size of crabs on the same basis as boats from Northumberland.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 20 November 1987]*: I have no plans at present to increase the minimum landing size for crabs, although I am aware that there is some interest in this possibility in the north-east of England.

Any proposed increase would be discussed with the industry and due consideration given to the position of Scottish boats, in consultation with my right hon. Friend's Department.

DEFENCE

RN Armament Depot, Beith

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all contracts awarded for construction work at the Royal Naval armament depot, Beith, since 1979, including for each contract *(a)* the commencement and completion dates, *(b)* the nature and purpose of the construction, *(c)* the name of the prime contractor and *(d)* the value of the contract.

Mr. Sainsbury: A large number of construction contracts have been awarded during this period and it is not possible to provide much of this information without disproportionate effort. The following information is available for major construction contracts in the last three years:

Description	*Start Date*	*Completion Date*	*Prime Contractor*
Spearfish Administration Building	November 1984	November 1986	Shand Ltd.
Spearfish fuel store	January 1986	August 1986	W. G. Barr Ltd. (Scotland)
Spearfish Integrated Weapons Complex	November 1984	November 1986	Shand Ltd.
Spearfish Non-Explosives Work Shop (NEWS)	December 1984	October 1986	Wimpey
Spearfish Engine Processing Plant (inside NEWS)	August 1987	October 1987	How Engineering Ltd.
Spearfish Leak Test Decontamination Facility	July 1985	April 1987	M. J. Gleeson
High Voltage distribution system	August 1985	April 1986	N. G. Bailey
Upgrade fire main	November 1985	October 1986	W. J. Barr Ltd.
Fuel drench system	March 1987	May 1987	Booth Park Projects

It is not our practice to reveal contract prices which remain a matter of confidence between the Department and the contractor. However, the overall value of the construction programmes listed above is approximately £20 million.

In addition, minor works valued at £1·71 million were undertaken between April 1978 and March 1987.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects construction of the integrated weapons complex at the Royal Naval armament depot, Beith, to be completed.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no integrated weapons complexes under construction at Royal Naval armament depot, Beith. Two have been provided, the last one being completed in November 1986.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the role of the Royal Naval armament depot, Beith, in the Spearfish torpedo programme;

(2) if he will list the functions and activities of the Royal Naval armament depot, Beith.

Mr. Sainsbury: Royal Naval armament depot, Beith stores, maintains and supplies a range of missiles, torpedoes and ammunition for Her Majesty's ships and submarines. This will include Spearfish when it enters service.

NATO Depot, Fairlie

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all contracts awarded for construction work at the NATO mooring and support depot, Fairlie, since 1979, including for each contract *(a)* the commencement and completion dates, *(b)* the nature and purpose of the construction, *(c)* the name of the prime contractor and *(d)* the value of the contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of construction contracts have been awarded during this period and it is not possible to provide much of this information in the detail requested without disproportionate effort. However, the following information is available for major construction contracts in the last three years:

Description—Improvements to fender units
Start date—November 1985
Completion date—July 1986
Prime Contractor—Kier (Scotland) Ltd.

It is not our practice to reveal detailed contract prices which remain a matter of confidence between the Department and the contractor.

In addition, minor works valued at £200,000 were undertaken between April 1978 and March 1987.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the functions and activities of the NATO mooring and support depot, Fairlie.

Mr. Sainsbury: The depot is used for the maintenance of moorings, storage of salvage equipment and as a logistic support base for vessels of NATO nations operating in the Clyde area.

Territorial Limit

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been noted in the location of Warsaw pact intelligence-gathering vessels around the United Kingdom following the entry into force of the 12-mile territorial limit.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to comment on security matters of this kind.

Flying (Canada)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if training carried out by Royal Air Force Tornados from Goose bay, Canada, includes simulated nuclear attacks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Royal Air Force aircraft, including Tornados stationed at Goose bay in Canada, are flown on a wide range of training sorties to ensure that the pilots have the necessary expertise to enable them to fulfil all possible wartime roles.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is being provided by his Department to the Canadian federal environment assessment review office in connection with its environmental assessment panel reviewing military flying activities in Labrador and Quebec.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information was provided by his Department to the Canadian Public Health Association in connection with its recent study on the health effects of increased flying activity in the Labrador area.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has provided the Canadian Public Health Association with unclassified data on noise levels of Tornado and Harrier aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum permitted number of low-level training sorties by Royal Air Force aircraft from Goose bay, Canada, under the provisions of the February 1986 United Kingdom-United States-Federal Republic of Germany-Canada multinational memorandum of understanding on use of the facilities at Goose bay.

Mr. Freeman: There is no maximum permitted number of low-level training sorties by Royal Air Force aircraft from Goose bay, Canada, under the provisions of the February 1986 multilateral memorandum of understanding.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level training sorties have been carried out by Royal Air Force aircraft from Goose bay, Canada, in each year since 1979; and what proportion of the total in each year was accounted for by *(a)* Vulcan, *(b)* Jaguar, *(c)* Harrier, *(d)* Tornado, *(e)* Buccaneer, *(f)* Hercules and *(g)* other types of aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: The number of low-level training sorties that have been carried out by Royal Air Force aircraft from Goose bay, Canada, in each year since 1979, by aircraft type, is as follows:

Proportion by aircraft type	*Year*	*Total number of low level training sorties*
98 per cent. Vulcan, 2 per cent. Buccaneer	1979	272
100 per cent. Vulcan	1980	263
99·6 per cent. Vulcan, 0·4 per cent. Hercules	1981	291
59 per cent. Vulcan, 40 per cent. Buccaneer, 1 per cent. Hercules	1982	127
64 per cent. Jaguar, 36 per cent. Tornado	1983	249
100 per cent. Tornado	1984	106
100 per cent. Tornado	1985	340
100 per cent. Tornado	1986	1,609
100 per cent. Tornado	[1]1987	1,626

[1] Up to 20 October.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum permitted number of Royal Air Force aircraft to be deployed at any one time for tactical low flying training at Goose bay, Canada, under the provisions of the February 1986 United Kingdom-United States-Federal Republic of Germany-Canada multinational memorandum of understanding on the use of the facilities at Goose bay.

Mr. Freeman: Under the provisions of the February 1986 multilateral memorandum of understanding, the Royal Air Force is permitted to station up to 20 combat aircraft for flying training operations at Goose bay, Canada, at any one time. RAF transport aircraft, which transit to Goose bay in support of routine operations, are also permitted to conduct low-level training flights.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the provisions affecting British forces in the February 1986 United Kingdom-United States-Federal Republic of Germany-Canada multinational memorandum of understanding on use of the facilities at Goose bay, Canada, since its original signing in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with the Canadian authorities since 1986 with a view to increasing the amount of Royal Air Force low-level flying training conducted at Goose bay, Canada.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Ministers (Private Offices)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of those in the private office of each Minister in his Department together with their qualifications, their place of higher education and last two places of employment, where appropriate.

Mr. Younger: The names of those filling private secretary and similar posts in the private offices of Defence Ministers are given in Vachers Parliamentary Companion and are as follows—the names of clerical and secretarial staff are not included:

Secretary of State for Defence

Private secretary
Mr. J. F. Howe

Assistant private secretaries
Mr. I. C. F. Andrews
Mr. W. C. Clark
Mr. D. C. J. Ball
Mrs. D. Faulkner

Parliamentary clerk
Mr. N. Patel

Special adviser
Mr. A. J. Dunlop

Minister of State for the Armed Forces

Private secretary
Mr. C. A. Gordon

Assistant private secretary
Mr. P. Turner
Flt. Lt. B. J. Tomsett WRAF

Military assistant
Lt. Col. F. R. Dannatt

Minister of State for Defence Procurement

Private secretary
Mr. C. E. V. Hain-Cole

Assistant private secretary
Dr. B. Collins
2/O C. Dedow WRNS

Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces

Private secretary

Dr. A. Cowpe

Military assistant
Sqn. Ldr. E. M. Stuart WRAF

Assistant private secretaries
Miss C. A. Plumridge
Mr. D. R. Miller

Under Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Private secretary
Mr. H. D. Kernohan

Assistant private secretary
Miss D. Brothers

With the exception of the special adviser to the Secretary of State who came from employment outside the public sector, all the others named were previously employed in the Ministry of Defence or with the armed forces. There are no particular educational or other qualifications appropriate to their present positions.

Air/Sea Rescue

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to publish the results of the evaluation exercise into the possible transfer of air/sea rescue contracts from the Royal Air Force to Bristow's; and if he will make available copies of the evaluation results to right hon. and hon. Members who have Royal Air Force bases within their constituencies.

Mr. Freeman: The Government will announce their decision on this complex question as soon as possible. The reasons for the decision will then be made public.

Aircraft Noise

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research is being undertaken to establish whether 70dB 12 hr LAeq contours can include noise levels from static aircraft prior to take-off.

Mr. Freeman: No research is required. The LAeq index takes into account all noise from aircraft operations, including the noise emitted by static aircraft prior to take-off.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amount of grant awarded to date by his Department to residents in the vicinity of Royal Air Force, Lossiemouth who have been eligible for sound insulation grants.

Mr. Freeman: To date, some £39,000 has been paid in grants under the noise insulation grant scheme at RAF Lossiemouth.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the nature of the survey to be undertaken by the Royal Air Force Institute of Community and Occupational Medicine at Royal Air Force, Lossiemouth early in 1988; and whether there will be any changes in procedures from those used in previous surveys.

Mr. Freeman: The aim of the noise survey will be to check the position of the average 70dB(A) noise contour in relation to Lossiemouth town. To this end, six measurement sites in the town have been chosen and agreed with Moray district council. The only change in procedures is that the microphones will be placed on masts well above the ground to avoid noise reflection and shielding from buildings.

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria were used in deciding on the hiring of ferries for use on Exercise Purple Warrior; what approaches were made to United Kingdom ferry operators; and what are the reasons for hiring overseas ferries for use on the exercise.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The choice of ferries to be hired for use in Exercise Purple Warrior was determined on the customary basis of availability, suitability and cost and, subject to these considerations, of giving preference to United Kingdom ferry operators. Approaches were made by the Government ship broker and the Government freight agency to United Kingdom and foreign ferry operators. Foreign flag ferries were hired because only two United Kingdom ferries were offered, of which one proved suitable for use. In peacetime, it is for ferry operators to make a commercial judgment on how to employ their vessels.

Weapon Procurement

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on discussions between the chief of defence procurement and his French counterpart, Jacques Chevallier, with regard to possible collaboration in weapon procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are committed to increasing equipment co-operation within the Alliance and officials have a regular discussions with their counterparts in all other NATO countries. In September, the chief of defence procurement and Mr. Chevallier presided over a joint Anglo-French conference aimed at identifying practical steps to achieve better value for money by extending the use of open competition, reducing duplication of development programmes and increasing interoperability. Discussions on these matters are continuing.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the lines of possible collaboration which have been discussed between his Department and the French Ministry of Defence regarding the joint development of nuclear and conventionally armed cruise missiles.

Mr. Sainsbury: As regards conventionally armed cruise missiles, the United Kingdom, France and five other nations have signed a memorandum of understanding setting out the broad principles for the possible collaborative development and production of a modular series of air-launched stand-off weapons and a request for proposals has been issued to Industry.

The details of our discussions with the French Government on nuclear matters are confidential.

Dartmoor National Park

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which areas and for what periods the public is denied access to the Dartmoor national park because of military live firing.

Mr. Freeman: The range danger areas at Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy, which cover some 10 per cent. of the area of the Dartmoor national park, were open to the public on a minimum of 289, 198 and 197 days respectively, during the course of 1986.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the Dartmoor national park is owned or leased by his Department for military training.

Mr. Freeman: Some 1,398 hectares are owned by the Ministry of Defence or 1·5 per cent. of the total area of the Dartmoor national park. A further 12,734 hectares are held on lease or licence.

Willsworthy Camp, Dartmoor

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his proposals for the replacement of Willsworthy camp, Dartmoor.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence proposals to replace Willsworthy camp on land recently acquired at Higher Beardon farm, Lydford, were submitted to the Dartmoor National Park Authority on 19 October, and we are following normal planning procedures.

The proposals do not affect one way or the other the general question of military, including live firing, use of Dartmoor for which essential requirement a need will remain.

The Willsworthy ranges are a vital part of the Dartmoor training area where the Army has been training since the last century. Willsworthy was purchased for military use nearly 90 years ago. The ranges were recently modernised, although this decision was taken only after it had been established that it would not be practicable to move them outside the national park. A camp will continue to be needed in the Willsworthy area to provide temporary shelter throughout the year, not a barracks as some reports have suggested, for the many soldiers, including service women, young cadets and those in the TA, using the Willsworthy, Okehampton and Merrivale ranges. Okehampton training camp could not be used for this purpose mainly because it is too far away to provide ready access to shelter from the harsh and rapidly changing weather conditions on the moor.

The reason for seeking to relocate at Higher Beardon is that the present camp is old and poorly constructed and the facilities it provides are wholly inadequate. It is, moreover, an eyesore. If agreement is not forthcoming for Higher Beardon, the camp will remain at the present site.

While Willsworthy camp is well located for military purposes, we believe it would be in the best interests of the national park to move the camp to a less conspicuous position off the high moor so that the existing site can be cleared and returned to open moorland. The new camp, which would cover a much smaller area than the present one, would comprise a single storey building, to provide basic facilities only, constructed in local stone and slate to be in sympathy with its surroundings. It would also be set in a natural hollow substantially hidden from view. The Dartmoor National Park Authority would, of course, be consulted on the detailed design aspects.

The planning procedures allow for our proposals to be considered at a non-statutory public local inquiry if necessary and if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment so determines.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the number of nuclear weapons withdrawn from deployment by NATO in Europe *(a)* as a result of unilateral decision by NATO, *(b)* as a result of bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union and *(c)* as a result of multilateral negotiations with the Warsaw treaty organisation, in each case since 1957.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since 1979 NATO has unilaterally reduced the total number of nuclear warheads deployed in Europe by 2400. Information is not readily available on all the detailed changes which took place to the European stockpile prior to 1979. There have to date been no withdrawals of nuclear weapons as a result of bilateral or multilateral negotiations.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, at columns *552-3*, regarding households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rate by the community charge, he will give figures of the estimated amount of money gained by gainers and lost by losers.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that gains and losses from the community charge would amount to about £100 million; this is equivalent to an average loss of about £2 per week for each household that loses and an average gain of about £2 per week for each household that gains.

Roads and Bridges

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the Government spending programme on roads and bridge maintenance will be allocated to Scotland; and which major Scottish roads and bridges will benefit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend will announce in December his decision on the allocation of funds to the transport programme. Fuller details will be published early next year in "Public Expenditure to 1990-91: A commentary on the Scotland Programme". Spending on maintenance is allocated to individual roads and bridges according to need as established by regular inspections.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the locations being considered for the proposed radiation monitoring network stations in the Highlands and Islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: North of a line from Oban to Montrose, the locations under consideration are:

Oban, Fort William, Mallaig, Diabaig, Benbecula, Stornoway, Lochinver, Dounreay, Kirkwall, Lerwick, Dalcross, Lossiemouth, Aviemore, Tummel Bridge, Dyce and Montrose.

"Prosecuting Sexual Assault"

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to implement the recommendations contained in the report "Prosecuting Sexual Assault" issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on 28 October 1987, at column *144*.

Intermediate Treatment Centres

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amount of his Department's budget allocated to the establishment of intermediate treatement centres in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Intermediate treatment projects have been supported by the following grants under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

	£
1982-83	474,000
1983-84	431,000
1984-85	385,000
1985-86	440,000
1986-87	501,000

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of intermediate treatment centres currently in existence in each regional authority, indicating any instances of where such centres are run jointly by regional social work departments and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Intermediate treatment work is carried out in different ways and different establishments. I shall write to the hon. Member about the range of provision made in Scotland.

Grampian (School Meals and Milk)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in Grampian region will lose entitlement to free school meals and free welfare milk after the Social Security Act 1986 is fully implemented in April 1988; how many of these children attend schools for those with special educational needs; and when he anticipates meeting representatives of Grampian regional council to discuss the implications of the implementation of the Act.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The children's rates of family credit will take account of the cost of school meals and, overall, I expect that more pupils will be assisted under the new arrangements than qualify under family income supplement now. I understand that Grampian regional council has estimated that about 1,700 children from families in receipt of family income supplement who currently qualify for free school meals will lose that entitlement. Information on the type of school these children attend and in relation to the numbers of children in receipt of free welfare milk is not held centrally. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet with representatives of Grampian regional council regarding this matter.

Grampian (Cataract Operations)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the current numbers of people awaiting *(a)* cataract removal and *(b)* joint replacement operations within the Grampian health board region, together with equivalent figures for 1985, 1980, 1975 and 1970.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

SSHA Tenants

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has given or intends to give a guarantee to Scottish Special Housing Association tenants that rent levels may be subject to an independent fair rent assessment in the proposed new housing legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 20 November to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide his best estimate, by local authority area, of the number of homes in multiple occupation and the number of people living in them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics, by local authority area, on the number of houses in multiple occupation and the number of people living in them are not available and there exist no reliable figures on which to base up-to-date estimates.

Violence and Indecency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the recorded number of *(a)* crimes of violence against the person and *(b)* crimes of indecency in Scotland for each of the last eight years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is given in Scottish Home and Health Department statistical bulletins 2/1985 "Recorded Crime in Scotland 1984", 2/1986 "Recorded Crime in Scotland 1985" and 4/1987 "Recorded Crime in Scotland 1986", copies of which are in the Library.

Crime Detection Rate

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the crime detection rate in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 5 November 1987 at column *876*.

Police (Numbers)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police officers there are in *(a)* the Dundee district authority area and *(b)* Scotland as a whole on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 30 September 1987 police strength in Tayside police was 1,004. The total figure for Scotland was 13,468. Corresponding figures for earlier years are as shown:

Year	*Tayside police strength*	*Scotland police strength*
1979	941	13,214
1980	970	13,261
1981	953	13,194
1982	964	13,214
1983	961	13,208
1984	967	13,225
1985	968	13,304
1986	1,000	13,428

The deployment of manpower within Tayside police is a matter for the chief constable. His annual reports for 1985 and 1986 show the strength of the force's central division (which is conterminous with Dundee district) as 427 and 446, respectively.

Homelessness

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures for the total number of homeless families and individuals in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 6 July 1987 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) at column *31*.

Housing Estate Improvements

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to give consent to district councils wishing to incur expense in carrying out improvements on housing estates where the quality of life is less than satisfactory.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Housing capital expenditure consents are determined, within the total resources available, on the basis of authorities' relative needs. In assessing these needs, my right hon. and learned Friend takes particular account of councils' own housing plans and capital programmes, and he would expect these programmes to reflect the most acute problems in each local authority area. It is, however, for authorities themselves to determine the priorities for expenditure within the resources allocated.

Private Tenants

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to allow private sector tenants to choose a local authority as a landlord.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Hypothermia (Pollok)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been recorded as having died or suffered from hypothermia in Glasgow, Pollok constituency in each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not readily available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tree Planting (Caithness and Sutherland)

Mr. MacLennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the proposal of the Nature Conservancy Council that there should be a moratorium on tree planting in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope to make a statement on this matter in the near future.

Self-Employed Persons and Small Businesses

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Scottish representatives of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses; and when he next expects to meet them.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met Scottish representatives of the federation in March 1986. Although he has no plans at present to meet them in the immediate future, we are in regular contact with the federation on a number of issues of concern to it.

Health Authorities

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent the SHAPE recommendations have been implemented within Glasgow, Pollok constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

Mental Health (Pollok)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities are available for community care with regard to mental health within Glasgow, Pollok constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally on a constituency basis.

School Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, how he proposes to assess the merits of the response to his consultative document on school boards so as to judge the degree of support for the ceiling powers proposed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I will consider carefully all the responses made on our proposals.

Footballers (Offences)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many professional footballers have been charged in courts with offences relating to their conduct on the field over the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding reply 20 November]*: The information requested is not held centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Homes Insulation

113. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the level of Government expenditure on homes insulation programmes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Provision in 1987-88 for the homes insulation scheme in England is £16·5 million. My right hon. Friend also recently announced extra spending power of nearly £45 million for local authorities to tackle housing needs this year, which will include additional provision for homes insulation. Some of the resources made available to local authorities by Estate Action are also targeted towards insulation measures. More generally housing authorities are free to determine their own priorities for the insulation of their housing stock within the financial resources available to them. Responsibility for these matters in Scotland and Wales is for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to amend the Housing Act to permit local authorities to discriminate in the provision of housing for the homeless in favour of long-term residents of that area.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is for local authorities to decide in the light of their duties under the Act how to secure accommodation for homeless people and how to allocate tenancies of council dwellings.

Markets

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on market rights and tolls 1891 that it is desirable to put an end to the system under which no person is allowed to hold a market within a certain distance of an already existing market.

Mr. Howard: No. Given the further development of regulatory and administrative controls over markets by public legislation since 1891 it would be inappropriate to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission as they stand. However, I am considering whether there should be changes to the system to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will review the rules, laws and customs governing retailing to markets particularly in the inner cities; and when they were last reviewed.

Mr. Howard: No. Such a wide-ranging review would involve many aspects of retail trading outside the Secretary of State's responsibilities. Local authority powers to operate markets were last reviewed in connection with the Food Act 1984.

"Tenants' Choice"

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make provision for tenants to have legal assistance and representation under the provisions of "Tenants' Choice" for the negotiation of terms with a new landlord by secure tenants.

Mrs. Roe: It will be open to any tenant to seek legal advice or representation if he wishes at any stage in the procedures under "Tenants' Choice".

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the period of consultation scheduled for consideration of "Tenants' Choice".

Mrs. Roe: All comments which we receive on the paper "Tenants' Choice; the Government's proposals for legislation", will be considered carefully whether we receive them before or after 4 December.

Women's Aid

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the potential dangers which women seeking refuge from violent men may face if Women's Aid refuges are obliged to register as a collective address upon the poll tax register.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 12 November. We have received about two dozen letters from Women's Aid groups.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends that non-payment, deferred payment, or part payment of the poll tax will disqualify a person from voting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have made clear repeatedly that registration for, and payment of, the community charge will be quite separate from electoral registration. No person will be disqualified from voting for any reason connected with the community charge.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in full the data on which was based the claim in his Department's news release number 460 of 12 November that introducing local income tax would, on average increase income tax by 6p in the £; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The total amount assumed to be raised from local income tax (LIT) was the net yield of domestic rates in England in 1987-88 (£8,100 million) less an amount attributable to rebates (£1,500 million). This was divided by the estimated yield of an extra 1p on the standard rate of income tax in England (£1,100 million), to produce an average LIT rate of 6p.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the way in which the poll tax will be levied on full-time students in higher education doing *(a)* first degree courses and *(b)* higher degree courses.

Mr. Howard: Full-time students will be liable to pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge and will be

treated as having their sole or main residence in the places where they are resident for the purpose of undertaking their courses.

Houses (Multiple Occupation)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities in England and Wales which have been visited by the environmental health officer seconded to his Department to advise on houses in multiple occupation since his appointment.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department's environmental health adviser has, to date, visited environmental health departments in the following English local authorities (his remit does not extend to Wales).

Bournemouth
Bradford
Brighton
Bristol
Cheltenham
Colchester
Derby
Exeter
Gloucester
Hove
Ipswich
Kensington and Chelsea
Leicester
Manchester
Nottingham
Oxford
Peterborough
Plymouth
Poole
Redbridge
Southampton
Southend
Westminster
York

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about initiatives on houses in multiple occupation undertaken by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is kept informed by the institution of its initiatives, details of which the hon. Member can obtain from the institution.

Berrywood Road, Duston

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make the appeal against refusal of planning permission for proposed residential development on land at Berrywood road, Sunston, Northampton, the subject of a local public inquiry.

Mr. Ridley: No. Both the appellants, Northampton Old Grammar School Foundation, and the local planning authority, Northampton borough council, have agreed to this appeal proceeding by way of an exchange of written representations and a site visit by the inspector. I am satisfied that the planning merits of the case can be satisfactorily assessed in this way.

Green Belt

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to lift development restrictions on green belt sites, such as gravel pits and disused factories.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. We remain committed to green belt policy as set out in DOE circular 14/84, which applies to all types of site in green belts.

Local Authority Finance

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in rank order the budgeted spending per head over GREA at ratepayer level for English local authorities, on the same basis as the criteria announced on 17 November in respect of the phasing-out of domestic rates.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is listed as follows:

Ranked overspend on grant-related expenditure per head at area level using 1987-88 1st supplementary report GRE's and budgeted total expenditure

	Overspend (underspend) on GRE per head (£)
City of London	7,630
Camden	477
Hackney	382
Lewisham	378
Southwark	368
Tower Hamlets	344
Greenwich	309
Lambeth	277
Islington	229
Hammersmith and Fulham	215
Wandsworth	190
Westminster	158
Waltham Forest	143
Kensington and Chelsea	137
Brentwood	125
Haringey	117
Harlow	102
Manchester	95
Newham	94
Liverpool	93
Newcastle upon Tyne	88
Ealing	84
Brent	80
Doncaster	77
Middlesbrough	69
Derwentside	69
Rotherham	68
Bolsover	67
North Tyneside	66
Carlisle	66
Barnsley	65
Gateshead	65
Langbaurgh	64
Knowsley	64
Scunthorpe	62
Sunderland	62
Calderdale	61
Copeland	61
Hartlepool	61
Barrow in Furness	61
Basildon	60
Wansbeck	60
Blyth Valley	59
Sedgefield	59
Tameside	58
South Tyneside	58
Allerdale	57
South Lakeland	57
Wakefield	57
North East Derbyshire	56
Kingston upon Hull	55
Wear Valley	55
Darlington	54

	Overspend (underspend) on GRE per head (£)
Sheffield	54
Chesterfield	52
Bradford	52
Wirral	51
Kirklees	51
High Peak	51
Eden	50
Bury	50
Wigan	50
Stockton-on-Tees	49
Salford	49
St. Helens	49
Thurrock	48
Elmbridge	47
North Bedfordshire	46
Bassetlaw	46
Erewash	46
Burnley	45
Bristol	45
Amber Valley	45
Thamesdown	45
Luton	45
Derby	45
Mansfield	44
Derbyshire Dales	44
Richmond-upon-Thames	44
South Bedfordshire	43
Rochdale	43
South Derbyshire	41
Mid Bedfordshire	41
Stevenage	41
Daventry	40
East Yorkshire	39
Ellesmere Port and Nelson	39
Cleethorpes	38
Durham	37
Rossendale	37
Bath	36
Welwyn Hatfield	36
Harrow	35
Boothferry	34
Tynedale	34
Barnet	34
Hillingdon	33
Barking and Dagenham	33
Northavon	33
Castle Morpeth	32
Alnwick	32
Oxford	32
Woodspring	32
Milton Keynes	31
Leicester	31
Great Grimsby	31
Beverley	31
Coventry	31
Crawley	31
Chester-le-Street	30
South Wight	29
Sefton	29
Holderness	28
Glanford	27
Kingston-upon-Thames	27
Hertsmere	26
Bexley	26
Berwick-upon-Tweed	25
Hyndburn	25
Pendle	25
Chiltern	24
Medina	24
Blackburn	24
North West Leicestershire	24
Ashfield	23
Newark and Sherwood	23
Chester	23
North Warwickshire	23
Sutton	22
Nottingham	22
Halton	22
Harrogate	22
Crewe and Nantwich	22
Kingswood	21
Watford	21
Warrington	21
South Bucks	21
West Oxfordshire	20
Three Rivers	20
St. Albans	20
Wolverhampton	20
Wansdyke	20
Leeds	19
Melton	19
Vale Royal	19
Dudley	19
Broxtowe	18
Easington	18
Rushcliffe	18
South Oxfordshire	18
Wrekin	18
Bolton	18
Congleton	18
Gedling	18
Oldham	17
North Wiltshire	17
Cherwell	17
Preston	17
Selby	17
Nuneaton and Bedworth	16
Enfield	16
Ribble Valley	16
Wycombe	15
Dacorum	15
Teesdale	15
Macclesfield	15
North Hertfordshire	14
East Hertfordshire	14
Harborough	13
Rutland	13
Broxbourne	12
Blackpool	12
Oadby and Wigston	12
Peterborough	12
Vale of White Horse	11
Scarborough	11
Ipswich	11
Stroud	11
Charnwood	10
Walsall	10
Forest of Dean	10
Sedgemoor	9
Lancaster	9
West Lancashire	9
Havering	9
Chorley	9
Kennet	9
Wyre	9
South Ribble	8
Cambridge	8
Fylde	8
Corby	8
Blaby	8
Northampton	7
Shrewsbury and Atcham	7
Aylesbury Vale	7
Portsmouth	7
Stoke-on-Trent	7
Birmingham	6
Kettering	6
Newcastle-under-Lyme	6

	Overspend (underspend) on GRE per head (£)
Cannock Chase	6
Castle Point	6
West Wiltshire	5
Fenland	5
Hinckley and Bosworth	5
Tendring	5
Epping Forest	5
Staffordshire Moorlands	5
Hart	5
Salisbury	5
Southend-on-Sea	4
Craven	4
Richmondshire	4
Stockport	4
Uttlesford	4
Reigate and Banstead	4
Gloucester	3
Oswestry	3
Tamworth	3
Epsom and Ewell	3
New Forest	3
Huntingdonshire	2
Rushmoor	2
East Hampshire	2
East Cambridgeshire	2
West Somerset	2
Ryedale	2
Chelmsford	2
Taunton Deane	2
Wellingborough	1
Adur	1
Winchester	1
Torridge	1
Rugby	1
Cheltenham	1
Fareham	1
Cotswold	1
Hambleton	1
Maldon	1
Spelthorne	1
Suffolk Coastal	0
South Somerset	0
South Hams	(0)
Mendip	(0)
Stafford	(1)
Torbay	(1)
Braintree	(1)
Mid Suffolk	(1)
Rochford	(1)
East Staffordshire	(1)
North Shropshire	(1)
South Shropshire	(2)
Warwick	(2)
Eastleigh	(2)
Rother	(2)
Southampton	(2)
Brighton	(2)
Teignbridge	(2)
Waverley	(2)
Sandwell	(2)
North Devon	(3)
Wealden	(3)
Hove	(3)
Stratford on Avon	(3)
Lichfield	(3)
Waverley	(3)
Merton	(4)
Tandridge	(4)
Eastbourne	(4)
York	(4)
Tewkesbury	(4)
Mid Devon	(4)
Babergh	(4)
South Staffordshire	(4)

	Overspend (underspend) on GRE per head (£)
Wimborne	(5)
Bridgnorth	(5)
Norwich	(5)
Lewes	(5)
South Northamptonshire	(5)
Test Valley	(6)
Redbridge	(6)
Hounslow	(6)
Gosport	(7)
Forest Heath	(7)
Mole Valley	(7)
Hastings	(7)
Colchester	(7)
Havant	(8)
Reading	(8)
West Devon	(8)
South Cambridgeshire	(9)
East Devon	(9)
Great Yarmouth	(9)
Wyre Forest	(9)
Carrick	(9)
West Lindsey	(10)
Christchurch	(10)
Bournemouth	(10)
Weymouth and Portland	(10)
Plymouth	(10)
Windsor and Maidenhead	(11)
Penwith	(11)
Basingstoke and Deane	(11)
North Cornwall	(12)
Kerrier	(12)
Poole	(13)
St. Edmundsbury	(13)
Mid Sussex	(13)
Restormel	(13)
Shepway	(13)
Arun	(15)
Exeter	(15)
East Northamptonshire	(15)
Lincoln	(15)
Croydon	(15)
Caradon	(16)
Solihull	(16)
East Lindsey	(17)
Bromley	(17)
West Dorset	(17)
Trafford	(17)
North Dorset	(17)
South Holland	(18)
Worthing	(18)
Thanet	(18)
North Kesteven	(18)
South Kesteven	(19)
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	(19)
Purbeck	(19)
Redditch	(19)
Canterbury	(20)
Swale	(20)
Tonbridge and Malling	(20)
Gravesham	(20)
Boston	(20)
Tunbridge Wells	(20)
Guildford	(20)
Newbury	(20)
North Norfolk	(20)
Sevenoaks	(21)
Broadland	(21)
Chichester	(21)
Malvern Hills	(21)
Wychavon	(21)
Worcester	(22)
Gillingham	(22)
Wokingham	(22)
Slough	(22)

	Overspend (underspend) on GRE per head (£)
Hereford	(22)
South Norfolk	(22)
Dartford	(22)
Horsham	(23)
Ashford	(23)
Maidstone	(24)
Breckland	(24)
Leominster	(25)
Bracknell	(25)
Dover	(26)
Surrey Heath	(29)
Runnymede	(29)
Woking	(29)
Bromsgrove	(33)
South Herefordshire	(34)
Rochester upon Medway	(36)
Isles of Scilly	(66)

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report the annual expenditure of the Merseyside development corporation each year since its establishment; and if he will detail, also on an annual basis, the size and proportion of their funds spent on the Wirral side of the Mersey.

Mr. Trippier: The annual expenditure figures for the Merseyside development corporation are shown. They exclude staff, office and estate management costs.

Year	MDC (£ million)	Wirral Area (£ million)	Per cent.
1981-82	3·944	1·069	27
1982-83	18·781	0·144	1
1983-84	28·968	0·643	2
1984-85	24·980	1·105	4
1985-86	24·487	0·714	3
1986-87	21·368	1·079	5

Pollution

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the principle of a 50 per cent. reduction in emissions of heavy metals, phosphorus and nitrogen compounds into the North sea within 10 years.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government accept that there is a strong case for reducing to a minimum inputs of the most dangerous substances, including certain heavy metals, to the aquatic environment generally. I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 18 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) announcing new proposals to achieve this.

So far as phosphorus and nitrogen compounds are concerned, any ecological problems in the North sea caused by inputs of these nutrient substances appear to be confined to certain localised areas. The Government believe that there is a case for seeking to reduce inputs to these areas. However, these substances are not currently posing problems in United Kingdom coastal waters.

We shall be discussing these matters with Ministers from other North sea states at the second international conference on the North sea in London on 24 and 25 November.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has anything to add either to his reply of 16 November or to that of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *858*, with regard to the number of licences issued in 1986 for taking merlin and sparrowhawks out of the wild.

Mr. Moynihan: My reply of 5 November, at column *858*, gave the number of licences issued for falconry by species of avian predator, and the number of birds taken by those species over a five-year period. My reply of 16 November gave the number of birds of prey taken from the wild under licence during 1986. In 1986 no licences were issued to take merlins from the wild; 45 licences were issued to take sparrowhawks from the wild, and 39 sparrowhawks were taken.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where he plans to establish the first housing action trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has yet to reach any decisions as to where the first housing action trusts might be. It is, however, expected that HATs will be established in London and elsewhere.

Homelessness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has plans to introduce legislation to amend the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and its successor statutes so as to redefine the definition of priority homelessness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have at present no plans to do so.

Condoms

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department is aware of any research recently undertaken into the biodegradability of condoms.

Mr. Moynihan: We are unaware whether any research has taken place recently. Whilst potentially assisting with disposal and processing, biodegradability may adversely affect performance.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken by his Department to alleviate the problems caused by condoms in sewerage treatment works.

Mr. Moynihan: Operational management of sewage treatment works is the responsibility of the water authorities like other materials, such as rags, plastics and so on, condoms are removed from sewage by screening at the inlet to the treatment works. I have had no representations from them that they have any specific problems in dealing with condoms at their works.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary for the Environment what advice his Department gives to environmental health officers about the handling of used condoms.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 10 November 1987, at column *107*, about advice to local authorities on the disposal of clinical waste. Waste

Management Paper No. 25 also advises on collection of such waste, although it does not deal specifically with used condoms.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what has been the number of jobs created in each urban development corporation in each year since 1981;

(2) what has been the number of jobs created in each urban development corporation *(a)* in professional employment, *(b)* in clerical employment and *(c)* in manual employment in each year since 1981;

(3) what has been the number of jobs created in each urban development corporation *(a)* full time and *(b)* part-time in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The information is as follows:

	London Docklands DC Jobs attracted[1] *(cumulative)*	*Merseyside DC Total jobs*[2]	*Net increase since March 1981*
March 1981	—	1,500	—
March 1982	1,000	—	—
March 1983	3,500	—	—
March 1984	3,860	1,735	235
March 1985	5,700	1,945	445
March 1986	8,000	2,185	685
March 1987	over 10,000	[3]2,492	992

[1] LDDC figures are new jobs attracted to the area and do not include part-time jobs.
[2] All jobs in MDC area, including part-time jobs.
[3] August 1987 figure.

In addition, there are some 1,500 to 2,500 temporary construction jobs in LDDC's area and some 700 to 1,000 in MDC's area at any one time. Regular data on categories of employment are not collected.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total number of jobs lost in each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: Some 3,355 redundancies were notified in the London Docklands Development Corporation's area between 1981 and March 1987.

Merseyside DC records net employment in its area. The figures given on employment are net of jobs lost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been *(a)* the actual increase and *(b)* the percentage increase in tourism in each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: Both LDDC and MDC have promoted projects and events aimed at attracting tourists and other visitors to their areas, but aggregate figures for the increase in tourism are not available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been *(a)* the actual increase and *(b)* the percentage increase in the use of derelict land in each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: Some 445 acres of derelict land and water have been reclaimed by Merseyside DC to date. This is 51 per cent. of MDC's total area which was almost wholly derelict in 1981.

Some 930 acres of derelict land have been reclaimed by London Docklands Development Corporation to date. This represents 37 per cent. of approximately 2,500 acres estimated to be derelict in the LDDC's area in 1981.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the expenditure on promotions by each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: Expenditure figures for LDDC are contained in annual reports, copies of which are laid before the House.

Expenditure on publicity and promotions by MDC:

	£'000
1981-82	31
1982-83	354
1983-84	603
1984-85	719
1985-86	604
1986-87	565

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the rise in land prices, by each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: Land price indicators in UDC areas have depended on particular local factors—location, land use, progress made in regeneration—which vary significantly within the area. No single measures of movements in land prices are available for either UDC.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in land used for warehouse development in each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the schemes undertaken in each urban development corporation by *(a)* start date of the scheme, *(b)* length of duration of the scheme and *(c)* the size of financial input by (i) private sector finance and (ii) urban development corporation finance and *(d)* the numbers of jobs created by each scheme, for each year since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the expenditure by each urban development corporation each year since 1981 on *(a)* land acquisition, *(b)* land reclamation, *(c)* roads and transport, *(d)* environment, *(e)* services, *(f)* other and *(g)* total expenditure.

Mr. Trippier: This information is given in each UDC's annual report, copies of which are laid before the House.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the amount of investment in *(a)* housing development, *(b)* office development, *(c)* light industry, *(d)* business units *(e)* retail *(f)* warehousing *(g)* other and *(h)* total for each urban development corporation in each year since 1981 by (i) private sector investment and (ii) urban development corporation investment.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available in this form but information about investment and development is given in the UDCs' annual reports, copies of which are laid before the House.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of investment by *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector in each urban development corporation by years from 1981.

Mr. Trippier: The information is as follows:

	London Docklands DC		*Merseyside DC*	
	Private sector investment £ million	*LDDC[1] investment £ million*	*Private sector investment £ million*	*MDC[1] investment £ million*
1981-82	483	60	—	4
1982-83			—	18
1983-84		51	3	29
1984-85	338	45	5	25
1985-86	361	58	4	24
1986-87	1,060	72	6	20

[1] Investment defined as total UDC expenditure less administration, estate managment, community and industrial support.

Local Government Elections

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of those who are eligible to vote in local government elections are *(a)* domestic ratepayers, *(b)* spouses of domestic ratepayers and *(c)* people who receive any relief from domestic rates because of special needs.

Mr. Howard: The available information for England in 1987-88 is as follows:

(a) 52 per cent. of the local council electorate is liable to pay rates.

(b) Precise information on the number of spouses of domestic ratepayers is not available. However, I estimate from data contained in the Family Expenditure Survey that there are about 9·5 million households with two adults where rates are presently paid in whole or in part—about 26 per cent. of those eligible to vote.

(c) 16 per cent. of the local council electorate receive partial or total rate rebates.

Planning Zones

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many simplified planning zones have been designated under the Housing and Planning Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 enabling local planning authorities to designate simplified planning zones came into operation in England and Wales on 2 November. I gave details in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 2 November, at column *598*.

Since the provisions have only just been commenced, it will take a little while for schemes to be adopted; but I understand that schemes are being brought forward in a few places already.

St. Stephen's House

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the light of the mouse and rat infestation in St. Stephen's House, what poisons and other methods of pest deterrent and disposal are being used in that building; whether they constitute any danger to the hon. Members and staff working there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any particular infestation in St. Stephen's House. Pest control on the parliamentary estate generally is carried out under contract by Rentokil. Difenacuum, in 0·005 per cent. concentration poured on granules, is used; this is not harmful to humans.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when emergency heating works are next carried out in St. Stephen's House or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster, he will ensure that emergency hot water supplies are provided in the lavatories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Modifications are being made to ensure that an alternative gas supply will be available to the whole of St. Stephen's House in the event of a future failure in the main supply. The parliamentary works office will do all it can to provide emergency hot water in the event of a heating failure elsewhere on the parliamentary estate.

"Land for Energy Development"

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the officer time and other resources that local authorities employed in their involvement, both as members of the working party preparing the report "Land for Energy Development" and as respondents to that working party's request for information.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available within my Department.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Citizenship (Forms)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the deadline for receipt of form E which is necessary for a citizen of the Republic of Ireland to remain a British subject; and whether, if enough printed forms are not available, photocopied forms will be acceptable.

Mr. Renton: There is no deadline for citizens of the Republic of Ireland claiming to remain a British subject under section 31 of the British Nationality Act 1981. Sufficient quantities of form E, which may be used for this purpose, are available.

Police Recruitment and Prison Places

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the extra money allocated to his Department as a result of the Autumn Statement will be devoted to extra police recruitment and prison places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Government spending plans announced in the Autumn Statement provide for an increase on previous plans of £360 million for Home Office programmes in 1988-89 and £450 million in 1989-90. These increases include £60 million more for prison building in 1988-89 and £92 million in 1989-90. Planned provision for prison capital for 1990-91 is £243 million of which £205 million is for building, compared to £237 million in 1989-90 of which £229 million is for building. An additional £45 million is provided for extra police manpower in 1988-89; within the total available to local authorities, financial provision for the police in 1989-90 and 1990-91 will be reviewed in the light of such factors as local authority budgets and progress in achieving the police manpower plans which I announced on 20 May 1986.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many occasions there have been in each of the past five years when the police in England and Wales have borrowed privately held firearms to control an armed or dangerous criminal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drunken Driving

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases, where a guilty or proven verdict of drunken driving has been reached in each of the years since 1975 for *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland, have involved (i) death and (ii) serious injury.

Mr. John Patten: Information on findings of guilt at all courts in England and Wales for "driving etc" after consuming alcohol or taking drugs is published annually in the Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales". Table 5 of issue 31/86 gives the figures for 1975-85, and those for 1986 will be published shortly. The latest information for Scotland is published in Scottish Home and Health Department statistical bulletin No. 3/1987 "Criminal Proceedings In Scottish Courts, 1985", table 3(C). Information on deaths and injuries resulting from these offences is not collected centrally. However, information is published in "Road Accidents, Great Britain, 1986" on the number of persons killed or injured in accidents where the driver failed a roadside screening breath test. Copies of all these publications are in the Library.

Mrs. Tehreem Saif Khan

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why it took his Department 10 months to reach a decision on the application of Mrs. Tehreem Saif Khan to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and when she may expect a decision on her husband's application that she be allowed to come to Britain to marry under English law.

Mr. Renton: In order to resolve Mrs. Khan's first application, it was necessary to interview her husband; this interview took place on 12 March 1987. The time subsequently taken to reach a decision was due to pressure of work in the immigration department. Mrs. Khan's new application to join Mr. Khan will require an interview in Islamabad; I have asked the entry clearance officer to reach his decision as soon as possible.

Local Radio

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to give his approval for the establishment of a network of independent local radio stations.

Mr. Renton: Local radio services are already provided by the IBA under the Broadcasting Act 1981. Earlier this year we published a Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" which outlined proposals for legislation under which these services would be more lightly regulated and additional local or community stations would be licensed. We shall make an announcement about legislation shortly when we have completed our consideration of responses to the Green Paper.

Field Sports

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions for offences committed by participants in field sports for the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will also specify the various offences in relation to which prosecutions were brought and convictions obtained.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available: the records held centrally on court proceedings do not include the circumstances of the offence.

Local Refugee Councils

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 208, if he will specify those local bodies or organisations responsible for making decisions on the establishment or otherwise of local refugee councils.

Mr. John Patten: There are no local bodies or organisations with a specific responsibility to make decisions about the formation or otherwise of local refugee councils. They can only be established if there is sufficient local support for them. The nature and extent of the support necessary to sustain a council will, however, vary from area to area.

Citizenship (Fees)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past 12 months he has exercised discretion to waive the fees payable for registration for British citizenship.

Mr. Renton: None. Section 42(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981 precludes registration as a British citizen unless the fee has been paid.

Metropolitan Police (Annual Strategic Review)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his practice to make the Metropolitan police's annual strategic review available to hon. Members.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner's annual strategy statement is published in January, and a copy is placed in the Library. Also, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's annual report for 1986, presented to Parliament in June this year, included for the first time a systematic review of progress towards the goals of the Commissioner's strategy. I understand that it is the Commissioner's intention to continue this practice.

Metropolitan Police (Misconduct)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Metropolitan police officers above the rank of chief inspector are currently suspended as a result of alleged misconduct.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One.

Metropolitan Police (Accounting Practice)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in changing the accounting practice of the Metropolitan police from a payments-receipts basis to a budget based on revenue and expenditure.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This issue is being considered by a working group of officials from the Home Office, Metropolitan police and London local authorities. The work of the group is nearing completion.

Plastic Baton Rounds

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many plastic baton rounds have been issued to England and Welsh police forces; and how many rounds are held in each force area;

(2) how many plastic baton rounds have been earmarked for each regional stockpile.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since May 1986, plastic baton rounds have been supplied to police forces from a Home Office central store. It is not the practice to disclose the number of rounds held centrally or the number issued to, or held by, individual forces. Those police forces holding plastic baton rounds are as follows:

Avon and Somerset
Essex
Greater Manchester
Hampshire
Humberside
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Merseyside
Metropolitan Police
Northamptonshire
North Wales
North Yorkshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Sussex
Thames Valley
Warwickshire
West Midlands
West Yorkshire

Commonwealth Prisoners (British Citizens' Right)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made for Commonwealth citizens currently serving sentences in Her Majesty's prisons who have the right to register as British citizens to exercise that right prior to 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 21 October at column *779*.

Filipino Women

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make illegal the mail order promotion of Filipino women as brides in the United Kingdom and to separate any marriage bureau facilities from sexually explicit magazines and sex shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: I acknowledge the concern expressed, but at present we are not persuaded that legislation would be appropriate.

THE ARTS

Area Museum Councils

71. **Mr. Cabom:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to implement the recommendation of the Museum and Galleries Commission in 1984 that the budget of the area museum councils should be doubled by 1990.

Mr. Luce: The grants to the English area museum councils are administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission. It is for the commission to decide the level of grants from within its grant-in-aid.

National Film and Television School

74. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received since announcing increased funding for 1988-89 for the National Film and Television School.

Mr. Luce: I have had a number of letters expressing appreciation of what I have been able to do for the arts in general, and the National Film and Television School in particular, in 1988-89 and in the longer-term.

Craft Council

75. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whom he consulted outside Her Majesty's Government in assessing the increased level of funding for 1988-89 for the Crafts Council.

Mr. Luce: I discussed with the Crafts Council its estimates for expenditure in 1988-89.

Museums (Oxford)

76. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit museums in Oxford in 1988.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so, but I much enjoyed my visit to four museums in the city of Oxford and in Oxfordshire in the summer of last year.

Museums

77. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many museums in the south-west open on fewer days each week, and for fewer hours each week, than in 1979.

91. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many museums in the west midlands are open on fewer days each year and for fewer hours each week than in 1979.

92. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many museums in Yorkshire and Humberside open on fewer days each year, and for fewer hours each week, than in 1979.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally.

82. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit museums in Cumbria in 1988.

85. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit museums in Sheffield in 1988.

88. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit museums in Nottinghamshire in 1988.

103. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to visit the Derby museum and art galleries in 1988.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) earlier today.

87. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what change in funding in real terms there has been for museums in Nottinghamshire since 1979.

94. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what change in funding in real terms there has been for museums in the east midlands since 1979.

Mr. Luce: This information is not held centrally. The funding of local authority museums is a matter for the local authorities concerned. The funding of independent museums is a matter for the managements of the individual museums which may seek funds from a number of sources to supplement their revenue. Museums in the area may also apply for support from the Museums and Galleries Commission and their area museum council.

89. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many people are employed on a voluntary basis in museums and galleries in the north midlands.

Mr. Luce: Of the museums in Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire responding to a survey by the Museums Association in May 1985, a half employed volunteers. The total number of volunteers involved was 182.

96. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts on what estimates or information he has made his proposed allocations to national museums and to the Museums and Galleries Commission for 1989-90 and 1990-91

98. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts on what comparative basis he proposes to allocate funding to the national museums and to the Museums and Galleries Commission over the next three years.

Mr. Luce: The allocations I announced on 5 November are based on an assessment of needs and priorities across the whole arts programme and are informed by submissions from the organisations I sponsor, including the National Museums and Galleries and the Museums and Galleries Commissions, about their future plans.

Funding

78. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts why he has announced a three-year settlement for funding of the arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I announced the three-year settlement to carry forward the Government's long-term financial plan for the arts, which is to maintain the level of support from public funds in such a way as to encourage subsidised bodies to become more self-reliant in their development and growth. I can report that it has been extremely well received, and I believe that it will provide arts organisations with the incentive and the opportunity for effective long-term planning.

Stoke-on-Trent

79. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit Stoke-on-Trent city art gallery and museum in 1987.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so in 1987. I visited the city museum and art gallery in September 1986 and particularly enjoyed seeing the important collections of English pottery and porcelain which are kept there.

Visits

80. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what visits he made abroad as Arts Minister during the summer recess.

Mr. Luce: During the summer recess I attended a meeting of the Culture Ministers of the Council of Europe in Sintra, Portugal and the opening of the Henry Moore exhibition in New Delhi, India. I also made official visits to Spain and to the Frankfurt book fair.

Arts Council (Grant Distribution)

81. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will seek powers over the distribution between different forms of art by the Arts Council of its grant.

Mr. Luce: No. I think it better that the Arts Council, not Ministers, should take these decisions.

Arts Council (Funding)

83. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about his decision to increase funding for the Arts Council in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I have been gratified to receive a large number of letters from arts bodies, artists and members of the public, expressing their appreciation, not only of the increase in the grant for 1988-89 and the two succeeding years, but of the encouragement I have been able to give to arts bodies which are trying to broaden their funding base.

84. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss levels of funding.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman regularly and funding often features in our discussions.

North of England Area Museum Council

86. **Mr. Dixon:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what change, in real terms, there has been in the funding of the North of England area museum council since 1979.

Mr. Luce: Grants to the English Area Museum Councils are determined by the Museums and Galleries Commission from within its annual allocation from the arts programme. I understand that since 1979-80 funding North AMCs as a group has increased by 9·5 per cent. in real terms.

West Midlands Area Museum Council

90. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many people are employed in museums and galleries administered by the West Midlands area museum council on Manpower Services Commission schemes.

Mr. Luce: Of the 97 museums in the area covered by the West Midlands area museum service that responded to a survey by the Museums Association in 1985, 22 per cent. ran Manpower Services Commission schemes employing a total of 381 people.

Natural History Museum

93. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has visited the Natural History Museum since taking over sponsoring responsibility from the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Luce: I have recently visited both the Natural History Museum and the Geological Museum, where I opened the new Plate Tectonics exhibition, and have been impressed by the enthusiasm, skill and enterprise with which the museum cares for, researches and markets its superb collections.

"Art in Government"

95. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his recent "Art in Government" initiative.

Mr. Luce: This is a pilot scheme under which I have commissioned and obtained a number of copies of six paintings by promising artists, for display in the Government offices for which I am responsible. I believe that this will enliven the working environment, at a modest cost, and encourage some deserving artists. I hope that it will be possible for other Government Departments to initiate similar schemes.

Small Theatre Clubs

97. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to support and protect small theatre clubs currently operating without a legally defined status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am aware of the increasing contribution these theatres are making to the overall theatrical picture, in London and elsewhere. I am currently discussing licensing conditions with the Arts Council, and depending on the outcome of these consultations, will determine how best to proceed.

British Film Institute

99. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whom he consulted from outside Her Majesty's Government before announcing increased funding for 1988-89 for the British Film Institute.

Mr. Luce: I discussed the British Film Institute's estimate of its 1988-89 expenditure with the chairman and director of the institute. I am very pleased to have been able to announce funding figures which will assist the institute to secure a firm financial base in future years.

Local Authority Museums, London

100. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he will take to assist local authority museums in London to further their work in and with their communities.

Mr. Luce: Responsibility for local authority museums in London falls to the appropriate borough council. Central Government assistance is channelled through the rates support grant and through the Museums and Galleries Commission and the London Museum Service, a division of the area museum service for south-eastern England.

Libraries (Services)

101. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to introduce charges for services at libraries.

Mr. Luce: The Government remain committed to the free basic public library service to individuals. But the enabling power referred to by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 22 July, at column 275, if passed by Parliament, could be used to give new opportunities to help public libraries grow by allowing them to charge for a range of specialised services, perhaps in partnership with the private sector. I propose to issue a consultation document in order to gather views on this.

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

102. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what criteria were used in determining the level of funding for 1988-89 to 1990-91, for the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: Due to the success of the scheme I have increased provision by over 70 per cent. — from £1·75 million to £3 million — to reflect the opportunity I expect for growth in sponsorship in 1988-89. I have also provided £3 million per annum for years 1989-90 and 1990-91 and will review this in the light of experience.

Works of Art (Loans)

104. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what further measures he is taking to encourage the lending of works of art by the national collection.

Mr. Luce: It is a key part of my policy to make the treasures in our national collections more widely accessible. I have had a number of discussions with trustees and directors of national museums and galleries about the scope for increasing the number of works of art they lend to other institutions. Such loans are facilitated by the Government indemnity scheme.

The grant-in-aid for the Museums and Galleries Commission that I announced on 5 November includes increased provision for the new travelling exhibitions unit which will act as a focal point and help develop initiatives for further exhibitions and loans throughout the country. I discussed the plans for the new unit with the commissioners last week.

Touring Companies and Exhibitions

105. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to encourage touring companies and exhibitions to reach a wider audience in the regions.

Mr. Luce: I have been able to provide a substantial increase in the Arts Council's grant for the next three years. Out of this increase, I have asked it to ensure that £5 million in 1988-89, rising to £7 million in 1990-91, is spent on incentive funding and increased touring in the regions.

The Arts Council also plans to establish an independent production company for which it will provide one-third of the investment required, to produce and exploit major regional touring drama productions. Any financial benefit which this venture produces, either from touring or from transfers of productions to the commercial theatre, will be used to supplement moneys already set aside for touring purposes in general.

Public Lending Right Scheme

106. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will increase his Department's contribution to the public lending right scheme.

Mr. Luce: I was very glad to be able to announce earlier this month an increase in the public lending right fund of £0·75 million which brings the annual fund to £3·5 million. This represents an increase of 27 per cent. and is the second substantial increase in three years. It will raise the fund in real terms to its highest level since the scheme was implemented, and demonstrates the Government's commitment to public lending right.

Donations

107. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how he intends to encourage more private and corporate donations to the arts.

Mr. Luce: I announced on 5 November a three-year settlement for the arts, which maintained the level of support and emphasised the importance I attach to incentive funding, so as to encourage subsidised arts bodies to become more self-reliant. The Arts Council is working up a new scheme for this purpose. Among arrangements already in place, my business sponsorship incentive scheme is an excellent example of how taxpayers' money can be used to attract more private sector funds, and I propose to raise it by 70 per cent. to £3 million next year. Other fund-raising opportunities for the arts have been provided by the payroll giving scheme and recent reliefs on corporation tax for company donations.

Lindow Man (Exhibition)

108. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on the question of displaying Lindow Man in a museum in the north-west.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of letters from members of the public and Members of Parliament on this subject. I understand that the British museum has agreed with the Manchester museum that Lindow Man will return to London in December but will go back to Manchester for a further four or five months in late 1990.

Sponsorship

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister for the Arts how the percentage of funds made available under the business for arts sponsorship scheme and spent in the south-east compares with the figure for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: The south-east has received 4·4 per cent. of funds made available under the business sponsorship incentive scheme out of a £4·7 million total for the United Kingdom since October 1984.

Merseyside

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to encourage the growth of the regional arts on Merseyside.

Mr. Luce: Following my grant announcement on 5 November, the Arts Council is developing proposals for incentive funding. I hope that arts bodies on Merseyside will seize this opportunity.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the number of admissions to the Natural History Museum in the six months following the introduction of admission charges; and what was the numbers of admissions in the comparable period of each of the three previous years.

Mr. Luce: The numbers of visitors to the Natural History Museum's South Kensington site in the last three years were as follows:

	Numbers
1984	2,318,000
1985	2,642,000
1986	2,678,000

Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Economic Study

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he expects that the study on the economy of the arts, funded by the Office of Arts and Libraries and undertaken by the Policy Studies Institute, will be published.

Mr. Luce: Publication is a matter for the Policy Studies Institute, but I expect the results to be available in the early months of 1988.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he has any information on the net loss or the net gain in revenue from income tax and other revenue sources that would be achieved by reducing all the higher rates of income tax to the basic rate;

(2) what was the gross amount of money raised by the additional margin by which the higher rates of income tax exceed the basic rate in 1978-79, 1983-84 and 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total tax liability resulting from the difference between the higher rates of income tax and the basic rate is estimated to be:

	£ billion
1978-79	0·8
1983-84	1·4
1986-87	2·5

The direct revenue cost of abolishing the higher rates of income tax, and the associated wife's earnings election, would be about £3·8 billion in a full year at forecast levels of income for 1988-89. This estimate assumes indexation of the current income tax allowances and bands for 1988-89, as in table 4.1 of the 1987 Autumn Statement. It does not include an estimate of the effect on total Exchequer receipts of changes in taxpayers' behaviour or other economic effects, resulting from the reduction in rates of income tax.

Corporation Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost in a full year of introducing a nil corporation tax rate for small businesses with net tangible assets of below £200,000 that are limited companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information required to provide an estimate is not available centrally.

Charitable Donations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Treasury of introducing relief for single donations to charities by companies in 1986-87 and the first six months of 1987-88; and how much of the cost was attributable to such donations to professional arts organisations with charitable status in the same periods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The revenue cost in respect of single donations in 1986-87 is estimated at some £3·5 million. The provisional estimate of the cost for the first six months of 1987-88 is a further £3 million. The cost attributable to donations to professional arts organisations is not known.

Shareholders

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest figure for the number of shareholders in Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 29 October at column *435*.

British Printing Industries Federation

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the British Printing Industries Federation about value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My ministerial colleagues and I have received a number of representations from the British Printing Industries Federation in favour of maintaining VAT zero-rating for books, newspapers and periodicals.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what payments are being received as rent by the Crown Estate Commissioners for pipelines and associated works on the seabed at Dounreay, Sellafield and Hunterston nuclear power stations.

Mr. Lawson: I regret that the amounts concerned cannot be disclosed as they are subject to commercial confidentially.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what directions he has given to the Crown Estate Commissioners to negotiate a rental agreement with the promoters of the fixed Channel link in respect of the promoters' activities on and under the seabed; and whether negotiations have taken place.

Mr. Lawson: None. The basis for the valuation for compensation for the transfer of the freehold interest to the Secretary of State, for the appropriate area of the seabed involved is contained in Section 7(3) of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987. Discussions as to the actual value are presently taking place.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in capital values on the United Kingdom stock market on the yield from capital gains tax arising from share dealing.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It would be premature to form a firm view.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the reasons for the published increase in the figure for the Central Office of Information in the Winter Supplementary Estimates; and if he will indicate what work the additional sums are being or will be spent on.

Mr. Brooke: The Central Office of Information winter supplementary of £29·9 million provides for expenditure on publicity which could not have been anticipated for COI's main estimate. Most of the supplementary is for the sale of BP shares on behalf of Her Majesty's Treasury (£22·3 million), and for employment campaigns, particularly for the Manpower Services Commission. The costs will be recovered from these departments as publicity is carried out on a repayment basis.

BP Share Issue

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate, as at 17 November, how many of the underwriters for the BP share issue have paid the full amount for the partly-paid value of shares they were committed to purchase; how many have not yet done so and which they are; and when he expects to receive the full amount from the partly-paid issue.

Mr. Norman Lamont: All underwriters met their obligations to pay the first instalment price of unsold partly paid BP shares on the dates specified in the underwriting agreements.

Indian Banks

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the status in the United Kingdom of the Punjab National Bank, the Union Bank of India and the Central Bank of India, following the closure of their branches in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: The Punjab National Bank, Central Bank of India and Union Bank of India announced at the beginning of this year that they would be running down their business in the United Kingdom with a view to closure in due course. Pending completion of this process, the three banks continue to be authorised institutions under the Banking Act 1987.

Privatisation

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest estimates of the gross proceeds to the Exchequer from the sale of *(a)* British Telecom and *(b)* British Gas.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The gross proceeds to the Exchequer from the British Telecom share sale in November 1984 are £3,863 million and from the sale of British Gas plc. in December 1986 are £7,750 million.

Entertainment (Tax Allowances)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the total amount of expenditure on entertaining disallowable for tax purposes for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* Information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available centrally.

Eurotunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax treatment is envisaged for the benefits in kind in the form of free journeys being offered to private investors by Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to clarify the position over the liability to taxation of benefits in kind provided to shareholders in light of the decision of the promoters of Eurotunnel to offer free cross-channel journeys to their prospective shareholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 16 November and 17 November]:* The tax treatment of benefits to shareholders depends upon the particular facts of each scheme. The same rules will apply for Eurotunnel as for other schemes.

Married Women (Taxation)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in favour of reforming the taxation of married women.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer continues to receive a wide range of correspondence on this subject.

Tax Returns

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons why fewer adults are submitting Inland Revenue tax returns; and if he will publish figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* So far as employed taxpayers are concerned, fewer people are now required to submit tax returns than previously. Figures of returns issued at the commencement of each tax year and received back within the following six months are set out below:

Year	*Returns issued* (000s)	*Returns received* (000s)	*Receipt as per cent. of issue*
1979	8,105	5,945	73
1980	7,362	5,313	72
1981	6,499	4,469	69
1982	6,078	4,236	70
1983	5,813	4,364	75
1984	5,453	4,084	75
1985	5,255	3,941	75
1986	4,693	3,299	70
1987	4,672	3,199	68

No comparable figures are available for returns issued to the self-employed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Government Bills (Royal Assent)

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of Government-sponsored Bills which received the Royal Assent since 1957; and what percentage this represents of the total number of public Bills introduced.

Mr. Wakeham: The Public Bill returns, issued annually at the end of each Session, contain lists of all Bills which received the Royal Assent and indicate which of them were Government Bills. To list the 1677 Government Bills included in these returns, since 1957, would involve disproportionate cost. Thirty-seven per cent. of the total number of public Bills introduced since 1957 were Government-sponsored Bills.

Private Members' Bills (Royal Assent)

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will list those private Members' Bills which received the Royal Assent in each Session since 1957 together with the sponsors of each Bill; and what percentage this represents of the total number of private Members' Bills introduced.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend will already be aware of much of the following information which was given in a written reply to him by my predecessor on 26 January 1987 at columns *117-123.*

The information is as follows:

Private Members' Bills receiving the Royal Assent

1957-58

Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy Charities
Costs of Leases
Divorce (Insanity and Desertion)
Drainage Rates
First Offenders
Industrial Assurance and Friendly Societies Act 1948 (Amendments)
Interest on Damages (Scotland)
Litter
Local Government (Omnibus Shelters and Queue Barriers) (Scotland)
Marriages Acts (Amendment)
Matrimonial Causes (Property and Maintenance)
Matrimonial Proceedings (Children)
Medical Act 1956 (Amendment)
Metropolitan Police Act 1939 (Amendment)
Opticians
Physical Training and Recreation
Reading Almshouse and Municipal Charities
Road Transport Lighting (Amendment)
Royal Institution of Great Britain Charity
St. James' Dwellings Charity
Solicitors (Scotland)
Trading Representatives (Disabled Persons)
Variation of Trusts

1958-59

Agricultural Improvement Grants
Criminal Justice Administration (Amendment)
Eisteddfod
Family Allowances and National Insurance
Fatal Accidents
Hospital of St. Mary Magdalene and Other Charities (Newcastle upon Tyne) Charity
Hospital of St. Nicholas (Salisbury) Charity
Housing (Underground Rooms)
Intestate Husbands' Estate (Scotland)
Jesus Hospital (Rothwell) Charity
Landlord and Tenant (Furniture and Fittings)
Legitimacy
Marriage (Secretaries of Synagogues)
Obscene Publications
Police Federation
Poor's Coal Charity (Wavendon) Charity
Restriction of Offensive Weapons
Small Lotteries and Gaming Act 1956 (Amendment)
Solicitors (Amendment)
Supreme Court of Judication (Amendment)

1959-60

Abandonment of Animals
Adoption
Bromley College and other charities
Chipping Sodbury Town Trust
Clean Rivers (Estuaries and Tidal Waters)
Corporate Bodies Contracts
First Offenders (Scotland)
Game Laws (Amendment)
House of Commons Members Fund
Marriage (Enabling)
Noise Abatement
Offices
Oil Burners (Standards)
Pawnbrokers
Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings)
Road Traffic (Amendment)
Road Traffic (Driving of Motor Cycles)
United Charities of Nathaniel Waterhouse and other charities (Halifax)
Wages Arrestment Limitation (Amendment) (Scotland)

1960-61

Barristers (Qualification for Office)
Carriage by Air
Companies (Floating Charges) (Scotland)
Consumer Protection
Court of Chancery of Lancaster (Amendment)
Credit-Sale Agreements (Scotland)
Highways (Miscellaneous Provisions)
Home Safety
Industrial and Provident Societies
Mock Auctions
Nurses (Amendment)
Oaths Act 1888 (Amendment)
Police Federation
Printer's Imprint
Private Street Works
Public Authorities (Allowances)
Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959 (Amendment)
Rivers (Prevention of Pollution)
Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage
Small Estates (Representation)

1961-62

Agriculture and Forestry Associations
Air Guns and Shot Guns etc.
Animals (Cruel Poisons)
British Museum
Carriage by Air (Supplementary Provisions)
Coal Consumers' Councils (Northern Irish Interests)
Drainage Rates
House of Commons Members' Fund
Landlord and Tenant
Law Reform (Damages and Solatium) (Scotland)
Law Reform (Husband and Wife)
Law Authorities (Historic Buildings)
Local Government (Records)
Lotteries and Gaming
Marriage (Wales and Monmouthshire)
National Assistance Act 1948 (Amendment)
Penalties for Drunkenness
Police Federations
Recorded Delivery Service
Shops (Airports)

1962-63

Animal Boarding Establishments
Corn Rents
Deer
Dog Racing (Appointed Days) Changed to (Betting Days)
Drainage Rates
Forestry (Sale of Land) (Scotland)
Limitation
Local Authorities (Land)
Local Government (Financial Provisions)
Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation
Nursing Homes
Oaths and Evidence (Overseas Authorities) and Countries
Oil in Navigable Waters
Performers' Protection
Public Lavatories (Turnstiles)
Sheriff Courts (Civil Jurisdiction and Procedure) (Scotland)
Stock Transfer
Wills

1963-64

Adoption
Animals (Restriction of Importation)
Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amusements with Prizes)
British Nationality (No.2)
Burgh Police (Amendment) (Scotland)
Criminal Procedure (Right of Reply)
Dangerous Drugs
Divorce (Scotland)
Elections (Welsh Forms)
Episcopal Church (Scotland)
Films
Fireworks
Hairdressers (Registration)
Law of Property (Joint Tenants)
Local Government (Development and Finance) (Scotland)
Local Government (Pecuniary Interests)
Married Women's Property
Merchant Shipping
National Health Service (Hospital Boards)

New Forest
New Towns (No.2)
Nurses
Pharmacy and Poisons (Amendment)
Protection of Animals (Anaesthetics)
Protection of Birds Act 1954 (Amendment)
Riding Establishments
Road Traffic
Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1923 (Amendment)
Scrap Metal Dealers
Trade Union (Amalgamations, etc)
Trading Stamps
Trustee Savings Banks
Universities and College Estates
Young Persons (Employment)

1964-65
Administration of Estates (Small Payments)
British Nationality
Carriage of Goods by Road
Criminal Justice
Criminal Procedure (Attendance of Witnesses)
Criminal Procedure (Scotland)
Highways (Amendment)
Justices of the Peace
Local Government (Scotland) Act 1947 (Amendment) (No.2)
Lost Property (Scotland)
Merchant Shipping
Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty)
Public Health (Notification of Births)
Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries
Shops (Early Closing Days)
Solicitors
Solicitors (Scotland)

1965-66
None

1966-67
Abortion (No. 2) see Medical Termination of Pregnancy
Antarctic Treaty
Civic Amenities
Deer (Amendment) (Scotland)
Farm and Garden Chemicals
Industrial and Provident Societies
Land Registration
Licensing (Amendment)
Licensing (Certificates in Suspense) (Scotland)
Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod
Matrimonial Homes
Medical Termination of Pregnancy
Merchant Shipping
National Health Service (Family Planning)
National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) (Amendment)
Private Places of Entertainment (Licensing)
Protection of Birds
Refreshment Houses
Road Traffic (Amendment)
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction)
Sexual Offences (No. 2)
Slaughter of Poultry
Teachers of Nursing
Tokyo Convention
Vessels Protection

1967-68
Adoption
Caravan Sites
Clean Air
Design Copyright
Domestic and Appellate Proceedings (Restriction of Publicity)
Friendly and Industrial and Provident Societies
Hearing Aid Council
Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland)
Local Authorities' Mutual Investment Trust
Maintenance Orders
Sale of Venison (Scotland) (No. 2)
Theatres
Wills

1968-69
Architects Registration (Amendment)
Auctions (Bidding Agreements)
Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment)
Divorce Reform
Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance)
Employers' Liability (Defective Equipment)
Licensing (Scotland)
National Mod (Scotland)
Ponies
Public Health (Recurring Nuisances)
Sharing of Church Buildings
Tattooing of Minors

1969-70
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons
Conservation of Seals
Education (School Milk)
Food and Drugs (Milk)
Game
Indecent Advertisements (Amendment)
Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions)
Local Government (Footpaths and Open Spaces) (Scotland)
Marriage (Registrar General's Licence)
New Forest
Parish Councils and Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Authorities)
Proceedings against Estates
Riding Establishments
Road Traffic (Disqualification)
Trees

1970-71
Administration of Estates
Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment)
Carriage of Goods by Sea
Consumer Protection
Dangerous Litter
Interest on Damages (Scotland)
Law Reform Miscellaneous Provisions
Motor Vehicles (Passenger Insurance)
Nullity of Marriage
Powers of Attorney
Unsolicited Goods and Services
Welsh National Opera Company

1971-72
Affiliated Proceedings (Amendment) (No. 2)
Carriage by Railway
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Scotland)
Civil Evidence
Defective Premises
Harbours, Piers and Ferries (Scotland)
Matrimonial Proceedings (Polygamous Marriages)
National Health Service (Family Planning) Amendment
National Insurance (Amendment)
Performers' Protection
Police
Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries
Social Work (Scotland)
Sunday Cinema
Sunday Theatre (No. 2)
Trade Descriptions
Trading Representations (Disabled Persons) (Amendment)

1972-73
Badgers
Breeding of Dogs
Dentists (Amendment)
Domicile and Matrimonial Proceedings
Employment Agencies
Employment of Children
Gaming (Amendment)
Hallmarking
Heavy Commercial Vehicle (Controls and Regulations)
Law Reform (Dilegence) (Scotland)
London Cab
Protection of Wrecks
Rate Rebate

Sea Fisheries (Shellfish)
Succession (Scotland)

1973-74
None

1974
Carriage of Passengers by Road
Education (Mentally Handicapped Children) (Scotland)
Mines (Working Facilities and Support)
Parks Regulation (Amendment)
Rehabilitation of Offenders
Town and Country Amenities
Lord Chancellor (Tenure of Office and Discharge of Ecclesiastical Functions)

1974-75
Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants (previously Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Protection)
Evidence (Proceedings in Other Jurisdictions)
Farriers (Registration)
Guard Dogs
Hearing Aid Council (Extension)
International Road Haulage Permits
Litigants in person (Costs and Expenses)
Mental Health (Amendment)
Mobile Homes
Unsolicited Goods and Services (Amendment)

1975-76
Chronically sick and Disabled persons (Amendment) (No. 2)
Congenital Disabilities (Civil Liability)
Dangerous Wild Animals
Divorce (Scotland) (No. 2)
Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings
Explosives (Age of Purchase &c.)
Food and Drugs (Control of Food Premises)
Industrial Common Ownership
Licensing (Amendment)
Motor-Cycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemption)
Protection of Birds (Amendment)
Representation of the People (Armed Forces)
Sexual Offences (Amendment)
Solicitors (Scotland)
Stock Exchange (completion of Bargains)
Theatres Trust

1976-77
Control of Food Premises (Scotland)
Farriers Registration (Amendment)
Housing (Homeless Persons)
Insurance Brokers (Registration)
Licensing (Amendment)
Minibus
Presumption of Death (Scotland)
Rentcharges
Roe Deer (Close Seasons)
Town and Country Planning (Amendment)
Unfair Contract Terms

1977-78
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland)
Civil Liability (Contribution)
Consumer Safety
Education (Northern Ireland)
Import of Live Fish (Scotland)
Industrial and Provident Societies
Internationally Protected Persons
Local Government [formerly Local Government Act 1974 (Amendment)]
Protection of Children
Rating (Disabled Persons)
Theatres Trust (Scotland)

1978-79
Confirmation to Small Estates (Scotland)
Criminal Evidence
Films

1979-80
Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment)
Concessionary Travel for Handicapped Persons (Scotland)
Coroners
Deer
Gaming (Amendment)
Import of Live Fish (England and Wales)
Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons)
Licensing (Amendment)
Married Women's Policies of Assurance (Scotland) (Amendment)
Representation of the People

1980-81
Countryside (Scotland)
Disabled Persons (No. 2)
Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment)
Fod and Drugs (Amendment)
Forgery and Counterfeiting
Horserace Betting Levy
Indecent Displays (Control)
Industrial Diseases (Notification)
Licensing (Alcohol Education and Research)
Licensing (Amendment)
Local Government and Planning (Amendment)
Matrimonial Homes and Property
Transport Act 1962 (Amendment)
Zoo Licensing (No. 2)

1981-82
Children's Homes
Cinematograph (Amendment)
Copyright Act 1956 (Amendment)
Deer (Amendment) (Scotland)
Firearms
Food and Drugs (Amendment)
Forfeiture [formerly known as Relief from Forfeiture]
Gaming (Amendment)
Planning Inquiries (Attendance of Public)
Supply of Goods and Services

1982-83
British Nationality (Falkland Islands) [formerly British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Amendment]
Copyright (Amendment)
Coroners' Juries
Diseases of Fish
Level Crossings
Licensing (Occasional Permissions)
National Audit
Pet Animals Act 1951 (Amendment)
Road Traffic (Driving Licences)
Solvent Abuse (Scotland)

1983-84
Agriculture (Amendment)
Anatomy
Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) (No. 2)
Child Abduction
Cycle Tracks
Education (Amendment) (Scotland)
Juries (Disqualification)
Law Reform (Husband and Wife) (Scotland)
Lotteries (Amendment)
Prescription and Limitation (Scotland)
Road Traffic (Driving Instruction)
Trade Marks (Amendment)
Video Recordings

1984-85
Agricultural Training Board
Betting Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment)
Charities
Charter Trustees
Controlled Drug (Penalties)
Copyright (Computer Software) (Amendment)
Dangerous Vessels
Gaming (Bingo)
Hill Farming
Hospitals Complaints Procedure
Intoxicating Substances (Supply)
Licensing (Amendment)

Local Government (Access to Information)
Motor-Cycle Crash Helmets (Restriction of Liability)
Prohibition of Female Circumcision
Rent (Amendment)
Road Traffic (Production of Documents)
Sexual Offences
Town and Country Planning (Amendment) *changed from* (Town and Country Planning) (Protection of Trees and Woodlands) (Amendment))
Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment)
Wildlife and Countryside (Service of Notices)

1985-86
Children and Young Persons (Amendment)
Civil Protection in Peacetime
Consumer Safety (Amendment)
Corneal Tissue
Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation)
Drainage Rates (Disabled Persons)
Forestry
Gaming (Amendment)
Health Service Joint Consultative Committees (Access to Information) (*changed from* Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (Extension))
Highways (Amendment)
Horticultural Produce
Incest and Related Offences (Scotland)
Industrial Training
Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland)
Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship)
Marriage (Wales)
Prevention of Oil Pollution
Protection of Children (Tobacco) (Changed from Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction))
Protection of Military Remains
Road Traffic Regulation (Parking)
Safety at Sea

1986-87
Access to Personal Files
Agricultural Training Board
AIDS Control
Animals (Scotland)
Billiards (Abolition of Restrictions)
Crossbows
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces)
Deer
Gaming (Amendment)
Licensing (Restaurant Meals)
Motorcycle Noise
Prescription (Scotland)
Protection of Animals (Penalties)
Register of Sasines (Scotland)
Registered Establishments (Scotland)

The names of the sponsors of these 453 private Members' Bills are contained in the Public Bill lists issued each week. To list these names in the *Official Report* would involve disproportionate cost.

Private Members' Bills

Session	*Number introduced*	*Number receiving Royal Assent*	*Percentage*
1957-58	45	24	53
1958-59	43	21	50
1959-60	42	19	45
1960-61	55	20	36
1961-62	53	20	38
1962-63	50	18	36
1963-64	86	34	40
1964-65	80	17	21
1965-66	38	0	—
1966-67	107	24	22
1967-68	77	13	17
1968-69	94	12	13
1969-70	81	15	19
1970-71	67	12	18
1971-72	82	17	21
1972-73	85	15	18
1973-74	42	0	—
1974	39	7	18
1974-75	86	10	12
1975-76	85	16	19
1976-77	89	11	12
1977-78	89	11	12
1978-79	58	3	5
1979-80	125	10	8
1980-81	80	14	18
1981-82	93	10	11
1982-83	81	10	12
1983-84	118	13	11
1984-85	98	21	21
1985-86	114	21	18
1986-87	85	15	18

Liaison Committee (Report)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what response he has made to the report from the Liaison Committee, Session 1984-85, HC363; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: This report was generally in the nature of a factual summary of the inquiries that had been carried out by the departmental Select Committees in the previous two years. With regard to the references in the report to the nomination of departmental Select Committees after general elections, I do not consider that the existence of a standing order providing for nominations for these Committees to be put forward within a prescribed period would necessarily have expedited their establishment in this Parliament.

Select Committee on Procedure

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what response he has made to the recommendations of the First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1986-87, HC157, relating to the parliamentary calendar.

Mr. Wakeham: Ministerial views on the matters dealt within this report were given in written and oral evidence to the Committee. I am at present considering the most appropriate way in which this, and other recent reports of the Procedure Committee, might be brought before the House.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he intends to propose the establishment of a Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Wakeham: The establishment of Select Committees is a matter for the House. I hope to bring forward proposals when the necessary consultations are completed.

Select Committee Reports (Debates)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make it his policy, when departmental Select Committee Reports are debated on the Floor of the House, to table substantive motions on such reports.

Mr. Wakeham: Such motions will continue to be tabled in accordance with what is appropriate in the circumstances of the particular report.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Senior Departmental Structure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the structure of the senior levels of his Department (grades I-III) in 1979 and at present.

Mr. Portillo: The structure of the senior levels in the Department in 1979 and 1987 is shown in the table:

DHSS Senior structure (Grades 1-3)

	April 1979	*October 1987*
Permanent Secretary (Grade 1 and 1A)		
Permanent Secretary	1	1
Second Permanent Secretary	1	1
Chief Medical Officer	1	1
Chief Executive NHS MB	—	1
Total	3	4
Deputy Secretary (Grade 2)		
Deputy Secretary	7	5
Director NHS MB	—	3
Deputy Chief Medical Officer	4	3
Chief Inspector Social Services Inspectorate	1	1
Chief Scientist	1	—
Solicitor	1	1
Total	14	13
Senior Consultants and Advisers		
Director of Financial Management NHS MB	—	1
Chief Scientist[1]	—	1
Property Adviser[1]	—	1
Total	—	3
Under Secretary (Grade 3)		
Under Secretary	34	21
Senior Principal Medical Officer—Chief Medical Adviser	16	9
Principal Assistant Solicitor	3	2
Chief Nursing Officer	1	1
Chief Dental Officer	1	1
Chief Economic Adviser	1	1
Director of Statistics and Management Information	1	1
Director of Health Building	—	1
Director of Procurement	—	1
Director of Research Management	—	1
Personal Merit	1	—
Total	58	39
Total all grades	75	59

[1] Part Time.

Ward Closures

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many wards have been closed, giving the number of beds involved, in the last 15 years in hospitals under the control of Norwich health authority; and how many wards are now under threat of closure.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may like to approach the acting chairman of Norwich district health authority.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistical records are kept of the qualifying conditions of new claimants registering for unemployment benefit; and if these records distinguish between claimants who qualify on grounds of contributions only, and those who qualify on a mixture of contributions and credits.

Mr. Portillo: Statistics on unemployment benefit claims provided by the national unemployment benefit computer system include the number of claimants who satisfy the contribution conditions and qualify for unemployment benefit. These statistics do not, however, differentiate between those claimants who satisfy the contribution conditions by virtue of paid contributions only and those who rely on a record of paid and credited contributions.

Blood Products

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has considered introducing paid donors into the Blood Transfusion Service.

Mr. Newton: No. We will continue to rely on our blood and plasma donors who give voluntarily for the benefit of others.

Health Authorities

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual running cost of each regional health authority; and how many staff each employs.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested:

Region	*Total revenue expenditure 1986-87 £'000*	*Staff Employed*[1]
Northern	664,666	53,500
Yorkshire	748,109	59,600
Trent	914,488	74,300
East Anglian	389,423	30,500
North West Thames	777,781	54,800
North East Thames	976,100	69,100
South East Thames	857,088	61,900
South West Thames	650,071	45,700
Wessex	549,152	43,500
Oxford	433,809	33,200
South Western	650,026	52,400
West Midlands	1,049,734	84,200
Mersey	542,821	42,900
North Western	922,352	74,100

Sources:
Annual accounts of regional and district health authorities.
DHSS annual census returns of medical and non-medical manpower—regional and district health authorities.

[1] Whole time equivalents as at 30 September 1986.

Community Care Grants

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will consider making women in refuges and who have suffered domestic violence a specific and high priority category of claimant for the purposes of discretionary payments under the social fund regulations;

(2) whether the community care grant will apply only to a party of a marriage who has become homeless as a result of marital breakdown or whether it will also cover situations where the applicant has previously been living with her/his partner as man and wife.

Mr. Scott: The guidance in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library, makes it clear that

community care grants may be made where a relationship has ended and this includes both marital and non-marital relationships. This guidance gives priority to cases where there has been domestic violence and is therefore intended to cover the position of women in refuges.

Board and Lodging

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the changes which have taken place since 1982 in board and lodging allowances for all categories of *(a)* resident and *(b)* accommodation.

Mr. Portillo: Supplementary benefit payments for board and lodging include amounts for accommodation charges and any meals not included in the charge. The total is subject to a limit. Prior to 1985, limits were set locally in each DHSS office. Separate limits for nursing homes, residential care homes and ordinary board and lodging were introduced from November 1983. These were reviewed locally. A full list of the limits that applied at September 1984 is included in a DHSS document "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Allowances, Results of a special statistical exercise (29 July–29 April 1985)." A revised system of centrally determined limits was introduced from April 1985 with a new hostel category attracting a national limit of £70 a week. Limits for ordinary board and lodging were set in the range from £45 to £70 according to the area—details are available in Her Majesty's Stationery Office publication "Supplementary Benefit Maximum Amounts, Initial Periods and Board and Lodging Areas." Copies of both documents referred to here are available in the Library. The table sets out limits for all categories of residential care and nursing home since April 1985 to date, and gives details of increases to take effect from April 1988.

Residential Care and Nursing Home Limits—April 1985 to April 1987

	April 1985 £	*November 1985* £	*July 1986* £	*April 1987* £	*April 1988* £
RESIDENTIAL CARE					
Category					
Elderly	110·00	120	125	130	130
Very Dependent or Blind Elderly	—	—	140	145	155
Mentally Ill	120·00	130	130	130	130
Drug/Alcohol	120·00	130	130	130	130
Mentally Handicapped	140·00	150	150	150	160
Physically Disabled under Pension Age	170·00	180	180	190	190
Other	110·00	120	125	130	130
NURSING HOMES					
Category					
Elderly	138·60	170	170	175	185
Mentally Ill	148·60	180	180	180	185
Drug/Alcohol	148·60	180	180	180	185
Mentally Handicapped	168·60	200	200	200	200
Physically Disabled under Pension Age	198·60	230	230	230	230
Terminally Ill	198·60	230	230	230	230

Note: The limits for all homes in the Greater London area could be extended by up to £17·50 from July 1986.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) why there is a difference in board and lodging allowance rates for persons with mental illness and mental handicap, in residential care; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why new rates for board and lodging allowance show a further differential between persons with a mental illness and persons with mental handicap.

Mr. Portillo: The present structure of supplementary benefit limits for people in residential care homes was introduced in 1985 at the same time that the registration requirements for these homes were being revised. The Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984 specify that registers of homes kept by registration authorities must distinguish between categories of residents, reflecting the fact that different client groups have different needs. There are separate registration categories for mental handicap and for other forms of mental disorder past or present. Supplementary benefit limits were linked to these categories.

The limits were originally set in April 1985 on the basis of the best available information on costs and charges in residential care homes of different kinds. The limit in residential care homes for mentally disordered people other than mentally handicapped people was set at £120 and that for mentally handicapped people at £140. Since then we have monitored the levels of the limits making adjustments where necessary. The limits now stand at £130 and £150, respectively.

We have recently completed a full review of all the supplementary benefit limits and concluded that the limit for mentally handicapped people should be increased by £10 to £160 from April 1988. We gave very careful consideration as to whether an increase in the limit for people with other forms of mental disorder was also warranted. However, whilst costs in homes for such people have increased, the review indicated that most charges were still covered by the limit. On balance, therefore, we decided that an increase was not appropriate.

Doctors and Nurses (Training)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures for the estimated average cost of training *(a)* a doctor and *(b)* a nurse.

Mr. Newton: The universities' cost of five years' medical education was £40,800 per medical student in

1985-86. This cost does not include student support, NHS costs in support of clinical teaching, or any post-graduate education.

The estimated average cost of training a registered general nurse over a three-year course is £12,600. This figure excludes that part of the cost of the trainee's remuneration and other costs estimated to represent the value of the contribution the training makes to patient services.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the total number of *(a)* doctors and *(b)* nurses completing basic training courses in the private medical sector.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. We are advised by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting that during the year ended 31 March 1987, 352 nurses completed basic nurse training in training schools outside the National Health Service, including those who trained in the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man. Comparable information for earlier years is not readily available. No medical training is provided by the private sector.

Torbay Health Authority

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he hopes to reply to the letter of 2 November from the hon. Member of South Hams enclosing another from Anthony Boyce, chairman of the Torbay health authority, concerning the rate of growth in the Torbay health authority area during the coming year.

Mrs. Currie: I replied to my hon. Friend today.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the question from the hon. Member for Warrington, North, for answer on 9 November, concerning private nursing homes.

Mrs. Currie: I replied to the hon. Member on 20 November.

Benefit Offices

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of supplementary benefit offices; and if he will, in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), *Official Report*, 4 November, columns *774-81*, show the offices whose allocation under the social fund will be less than is paid out in the current year on single payments, and by how much.

Mr. Scott: There are 453 supplementary benefit offices. As these offices do not receive allocations for single payment expenditure it will not be possible to compare the social fund budgets for 1988-89 with their single payment expenditure for 1987-88 until provisional outturn figures for the latter year are available on an office by office basis. Such figures are likely to be available in July 1988.

Social Security (Prosecutions)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prosecutions his Department has sought against social security claimants in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of prosecutions undertaken by the Department for fraudulent claims to social security benefits are as follows:

	Number
1979-80	16,635
1980-81	18,801
1981-82	14,206
1982-83	11,334
1983-84	5,997
1984-85	6,702
1985-86	6,679
1986-87	6,603

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects work on the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital to be completed.

Mrs. Currie: Internal work was completed in September; remaining external works are scheduled for completion at the end of the year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital to be brought into use.

Mrs. Currie: Commissioning is under way; the first admission is planned for early December with full occupation by the end of January 1988.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost to date of the restoration works undertaken on the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital.

Mrs. Currie: So far about £17·01 million has been paid in fees and construction costs.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated final total cost of restoring the cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital.

Mrs. Currie: At an historic (1982) price base, which was used in all earlier estimates, the latest estimated building and engineering cost of restoration is £12·8 million. At current prices, with design fees included, but excluding equipment, the total estimated cost of the restoration is £20·25 million.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of equipping the restored cardiac block at Great Ormond street hospital.

Mrs. Currie: The net cost of equipping the cardiac wing, after offsetting the value of equipment purchased when the wing was originally built and subsequently sold or redeployed elsewhere, is estimated at £650,000.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate, on the basis of benefit rates from April 1988 and the expected claiming pattern, the number of families and dependent children who, but for child benefit, would be entitled to income-related benefits by each Birmingham parliamentary constituency or by each office of his Department by address, in Birmingham.

Mr. Scott: The information is only available nationally and cannot be given for particular areas. The national

figures were given in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys-Williams) on 9 November at column *85*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the number of pensioner households in each Birmingham parliamentary constituency, or by Birmingham offices of his Department by address, who would be entitled to housing benefit but for changes under the Social Security Act 1986 for April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that we do not keep information in the form or to the degree of detail requested.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Servies whether he will estimate the total amount paid in supplementary benefit single payments to claimants in the Birmingham, Erdington constituency in each of the past three years.

Mr. Portillo: Two of the Department's local offices serve the Birmingham, Erdington constituency, Erdington and Perry Barr, but their boundaries are not conterminous. The information requested is given in the table.

	Erdington ILO £	*Perry Barr ILO* £
1984-85	765,366	456,760
[1]1985-86	1,138,574	767,483
[1]1986-87	1,276,165	995,884

[1] The figures given for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are provisional and subject to amendment.
Note: The figures are for the years May to April.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimated outturn for expenditure on supplementary benefit in 1987-88.

Mr. Scott: Current estimates provision for expenditure on supplementary benefit stands at £8,255 million. The latest forecasts of outturn will be given in the public expenditure White Paper due to be published in January 1988.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the estimated numbers of supplementary benefit claimants in 1987-88 and the expected numbers of income support claimants in 1988-89.

Mr. Scott: The estimated numbers of supplementary benefit and income support claimants given in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper are as follows:

	Million
1987-88	4·93
1988-89	5·00

The estimate for 1988-89 is based on the assumption that there will be no change in the number of people who would have been receiving supplementary benefit if it were not being replaced by income support.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, column *99*, whether paragraph 1 of circular S 42/85 accurately reflects the Chief Adjudication Officer's current view of the meaning of "adult" in paragraph 18 of schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. The Chief Adjudication Officer's interpretation of the term "adult" is supported by paragraph 10 of reported commissioner's decision R(SB)16/83, a copy of which is in the Library. Although some more recent unreported decisions have followed the interpretation in R(SB)16/83, some others have indicated that the term "adult" should be interpreted as "aged 18 or over". The Chief Adjudication Officer, therefore, intends to seek an early opportunity to clarify the question before a tribunal of commissioners.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the current rates for special needs additions, indicating for each the additional requirements for the claimants which these sums are intended to meet;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the current normal supplementary benefit rates for different categories of claimants, indicating for each the normal requirements for those claimants which these sums are intended to meet.

Mr. Portillo: The information is contained in regulation 4(1) of, and schedules 1 and 4 to, the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983 as amended. These are at pages 1690, 1744 and 1753 to 1762 of "The Law relating to Supplementary Benefits and Family Income Supplement", a copy of which is in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will detail the basis upon which the allocation of social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 to each office of his Department was calculated, showing the relationship between the budgets and the current level of supplementary benefit single payment claims; and if he will place an explanatory document in the Library.

Mr. Scott: I will arrange for an explanation of the basis of the allocation of the social fund budgets for 1988-89 to be placed in the Library. The current estimate of single payments expenditure in the financial year 1987-88 is £190 million. The national social fund budget for 1988-89 will be £203 million; £60 million for grant, £141 million for loans and £2 million to be held as a central contingency reserve.

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what his Department's local office annual budgets will be in respect of *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans from the social fund for each of the following: Redcar, Eston, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool; what the monthly or quarterly expenditure profiles will be in respect of each of these local offices; and if he will issue tables comparing these budgetary periods and expenditure with a single payment expenditure for similar periods over the past four years.

Mr. Scott: Information on the allocations for 1988-89 was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81*. A model profile of expected expenditure on a month by month basis will be drawn up at national

level. Local office managers may adjust the national profile to reflect particular local factors. The monthly profile of expenditure for the offices in Redcar, Eston, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool will be for the managers of those offices to decide. I will arrange for the information requested on annual single payment expenditure to be placed in the Library.

Nurses

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the manpower planning basis behind the provision of training courses for registered sick children's nurses;

(2) how many nurses registered as sick children's nurses in each of the last five years;

(3) what information he has on the number of registered sick children's nurses who left the National Health Service in each of the past five years;

(4) whether he has any plans to introduce refresher courses for registered sick children's nurses who are returning to the National Health Service after a break in service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for individual health authorities to determine the number of registered sick children's nurses (RSCNs) they require and ensure that there is an adequate number of places available on training courses to meet those requirements. It is always open to health authorities to seek the approval of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for additional training courses.

Information supplied by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting about the number of nurses in England and Wales added to the register for sick children's nurses between 1983 and 1987 is shown in the table:

Year ended 31 March	*Number*[1]
1983	800
1984	655
1985	729
1986	706
1987	858

[1] Changes in processing the information have occurred over the period shown; there are therefore inconsistencies in the series shown.

Information about the number of RSCNs who leave the National Health Service is not collected centrally. It is open to individual health authorities to organise refresher courses for RSCNs who are returning to the National Health Service after a break in service if it is considered there is sufficient demand for such a course.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to promote flexible working practices for nurses.

Mr. Newton: In June 1986 the acting chairman of the NHS management board wrote to general managers reminding them of the need to consider a wide range of employment and management practices aiming to improve recruitment and retention. These included flexible rostering, part-time working and job sharing. The Royal College of Nursing's recently published guide to nurse managers and others on better ways of managing the work force, called "Manpower Solutions", also includes guidance on these practices. It must be for local management to determine detailed working practices in the light of local circumstances, but progress on these issues is followed up through the accountability review process.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the courses in England, Wales and Scotland which train registered sick children's nurses; and if he will indicate the number of places on each course.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested has been obtained from the Nurse Central Clearing House for England, The English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, The Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting in Scotland. It realtes to courses in 1987.

In England a 53-week post basic course in registered sick children's nurse training is available to registered general nurses at the following schools:

Newcastle-upon-Tyne School of Nursing—72 places (three intakes per annum of 24).

Hull District School of Nursing—eight places (one intake per annum).

Leeds Eastern Health Authority—12 places (two intakes per annum of six).

Leeds Western School of Nursing—12 places (2 intakes per annum of six).

Derby School of Nursing—12 places (two intakes per annum of six).

Nottingham School of Nursing—24 places (two intakes per annum of 12).

Sheffield School of Nursing—eight places (one intake per annum).

Peterborough and Stamford Department of Education—six places (one intake per annum).

Wolfson School of Nursing (Westminster Hospital)—45 places (three intakes per annum of 15).

St. Mary's School of Nursing—eight places (one intake per annum).

Charles West School of Nursing—128 places (four intakes per annum of 32).

Brighton School of Nursing—16 places (two intakes per annum of eight).

Medway School of Nursing—six places (one intake per annum).

Charles Frears School of Nursing—10 places (one intake per annum).

Normanby College School of Nursing—six places (one intake per annum).

Thomas Guy and Lewisham School of Nursing—45 places (three intakes per annum of 15).

Carshalton School of Nursing—30 places (three intakes per annum of 10).

Southampton University Combined School of Nursing—eight places (one intake per annum).

Also in England combined registered general nurse and registered sick children's nurse training courses lasting three years and eight months are available at:

Great Ormond Street—72 places, four intakes per annum of 23.

Liverpool School of Nursing—54 places, three intakes per annum of 18.

Sheffield School of Nursing—42 places, three intakes per annum of 14.

In Wales, registered sick children's nurse courses are available at:

South Glamorgan School of Nursing—10 places, one intake per annum.

West Glamorgan School of Nursing—six places, one intake per annum.

In Scotland, post-basic courses in registered sick children's nurse training are available for registered general nurses at the following schools:

Glasgow Western College of Nursing and Midwifery—60 places, four intakes per annum of 15.

South Lothian College of Nursing and Midwifery—24 places, four intakes per annum of six.
Foresterhill College of Nursing and Midwifery—12 places, two intakes per annum of six.
Dundee College of Nursing and Midwifery—no places available this year.

Three-year combined registered general nurse and registered sick children's nurse courses are available, in Scotland, at the following schools:
South Lothian College of Nursing and Midwifery—30 places, two intakes per annum of 15.
Foresterhill College of Nursing and Midwifery—28 places, four intakes per annum of seven.

Medical Social Workers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he or his officials have had any consultation with *(a)* the Maudsley health authority; *(b)* Lewisham and North Southwark health authority and *(c)* Southwark social services concerning the relocation of medical social workers from hospitals in Southwark to social services area teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Officials have met representatives of the Special health authority, the Lewisham and North Southwark health authority, and Southwark social services to encourage a constructive and helpful dialogue about the decision of the London borough of Southwark to reduce the current level of services provided by hospital social workers. A further meeting between the local authority and health authorities involved is to take place today, 23 November. Officials will continue to watch the situation closely and report as necessary to Ministers.

Abortion

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the number of women since 1968 who have had more than one abortion.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the number of women who have had a second legal abortion between 1983 and 1986.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 where one previous abortion under the Act is indicated, residents and non-residents. England and Wales 1983-1986

Year	*Number*
1983	21,769
1984	24,330
1985	24,513
1986	26,880
1983-1986	97,492

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, *Official Report*, 6 November, columns *863-4*, he will begin to collect social class information on each woman successfully undergoing an abortion operation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of an abortion on the National Health Service; and what percentage of hospital discharges relate to women who have had the operation.

Mr. Newton: The estimated revenue cost of an abortion in National Health Service hospitals is £170.

In 1986 the number of women resident in England and Wales who had an abortion in a National Health Service hospital in England represented about 1 per cent. of the total discharges and deaths from NHS hospitals in England in that year.

Social Security Tribunals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent managers of local offices of his Department have complied and made available lists of local agencies prepared to help applicants at social security tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 24 July at column *710* and to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 22 October at column *881*. Local offices are now in the process of compiling lists where necessary so that the scheme can be implemented from 1 January 1988.

Family Practitioner Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the expenditure per head of population on the family practitioner service in cash and constant 1986-87 prices for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in respect of the family practitioner services in England is set out in the table:

Family Practitioner Services—Gross expenditure per head of population

England

	Cash £	[1]*At 1986-87 prices* £
1979-80	36	60
1980-81	45	63
1981-82	52	67
1982-83	60	72
1983-84	65	74
1984-85	71	78
1985-86	75	77
1986-87	80	80

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Prescriptions

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost to the Exchequer of prescriptions by general medical practitioners in cash and constant 1986-87 prices for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in respect of the family practitioner services in England is set out in the table:

Family Practitioner Services (England)—Net cost of prescriptions[1]

	Cash £ *million*	[2]*At 1986-87 prices* £ *million*
1979-80	751	1,251
1980-81	903	1,268
1981-82	1,038	1,327

	Cash £ million	[2]At 1986-87 prices £ million
1982-83	1,187	1,416
1983-84	1,321	1,506
1984-85	1,430	1,562
1985-86	1,529	1,575
1986-87	1,639	1,639

[1] Including fees and allowances paid for dispensing, and after deduction of receipts from patients' charges.
[2] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Relative Need

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the current review of the resource allocation working party formula to investigate the scope for improving the way in which the formula measures relative need across the United Kingdom will be completed.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 16 November 1987 at column *439*.

Unclaimed Benefit

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current estimate for unclaimed benefit in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow, Pollok constituency.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Benefit Waiting Times

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current average waiting times in Scotland for *(a)* single payments under the supplementary benefit scheme, *(b)* new claims for supplementary benefit, *(c)* housing benefit, *(d)* family income supplement and *(e)* INVA.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information in respect of single payments and housing benefit is not available.

Information in respect of new claims for supplementary benefit, family income supplement and invalidity benefit is not available in precisely the form requested. However, the following information is available.

The average clearance time for total new and repeat supplementary benefit claims in Scotland, for the four-week period ending 20 October 1987, was four days.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

The average clearance time for claims to family income supplement on a national basis is 14 days.

Source: Special count of claims to 24 August 1987.

The average clearance time for claims to short term contributory benefits (sickness and invalidity benefits only) in Scotland, for the four-week period ending 20 October 1987, was seven days.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Free Milk and Vitamins

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of awards of free milk and vitamins which were made in 1985 to *(a)* pregnant women and *(b)* children under school age, showing for each group if the ground for the award was (i) receipt of supplementary benefit, (ii) family income supplement or (iii) low income.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, as at the nearest date (February 1986; April 1986 for FIS) the numbers actually in receipt of free welfare milk and vitamins were as follows:

	Grounds		
	Supplementary benefit	*FIS*	*Low income*
Pregnant women	47,000	[1]8,000	7,000
Children under 5	802,000	124,000	77,000

[1] Estimate.

Departmental Staff

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to increase the numbers of *(a)* higher executive officers or *(b)* executive officers in his Department consequent upon the introduction of the social fund; if he plans to introduce any changes in the grade structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The staffing implications for the Department of the social fund have yet to be worked out in detail.

Operational Strategy System

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to publish the training plans for future users of the operational strategy system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No. It is not practice for the Department to publish its internal training plans.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what protection will be available under the new rule stipulating that unemployment benefit will not be paid until after the 26th week of unemployment if a job is left voluntarily by an employee, to those particularly women who leave their work on the grounds of sexual or other harassment, racial abuse, illness, particularly mental illness, dangerous working practices, or on the grounds of drunkenness or abusive employers.

Mr. Scott: Section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 disqualifies a person for receiving unemployment benefit if he or she has lost employment on account of leaving voluntarily without "just cause". The question of what constitutes "just cause" is a matter for the independent adjudication authorities to decide based on the individual circumstances of the case and on the considerable volume of case law that exists.

The Government's proposal is that the period of disqualification shall be expressed as "not exceeding" 26 weeks and this formulation will enable the adjudicating authorities to disqualify for a shorter period if there are mitigating factors though not sufficient to constitute "just cause". If a person is dissatisfied with the decision of the local adjudication officer he or she has the right of appeal to an independent appeal tribunal and from there on a point of law to a Social Security Commissioner.

Domiciliary Consultations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the last available year *(a)* the total cost of domiciliary consultations in the National Health Service and *(b)* the number for each specialty, with cost.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any information on sleep deprivation in junior hospital doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no such information. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 November at column *706* in which I set out the positive steps we have taken to reduce junior doctors' hours of work.

Invalid Care Allowance

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in cases where married and cohabiting women have been awarded both arrears of invalid care allowance and an extra-statutory payment to cover the period from December 1984, national insurance contributions have been credited for the whole of the period from December 1984 until invalid care allowance was paid.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* Yes, except in any period for which a married woman's choice of reduced liability for national insurance contributions was in force.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of married or cohabiting women who have since the benefit was extended to them *(a)* been refused invalid care allowance because they were in receipt of a national insurance benefit payable at a higher rate than invalid care allowance, *(b)* had payment offset by the amount of a national insurance benefit paid at a lower rate than invalid care allowance and *(c)* had payment of invalid care allowance offset by additions to other national insurance benefits in respect of dependants.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The information available does not distinguish between women according to their marital status. Since June 1986, when the allowance was extended to married and cohabiting women, some 2,270 claims from women have been disallowed on account of the payment of other social security benefits which equal or exceed the weekly rate of invalid care allowance (ICA). In a further 568 cases payments to women have been reduced on account of other social security benefits paid at less than the weekly rate of the allowance. No information is available about cases in which payment of ICA results in a corresponding reduction in a dependancy increase in another benefit which has previously been paid to someone else in respect of the ICA recipient.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what interest is payable on amounts of invalid care allowance which have been paid late.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* None.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when Mrs. Brigid McClennan of 26 Templemore road, Oxton, Birkenhead, will receive payment of the invalid care allowance she applied for on 5 November 1986. (Ref: 060011).

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* Mrs. McClennan's claim was decided on 17 November and she should receive payment within the next seven days. I regret that processing of her claim took much longer than is usual and I will be writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department, in dealing with claims for invalid care allowance, follows its normal practice of paying interest where payment is delayed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* It is not the normal practice of the Department to pay interest where payment of benefit is delayed for more than 12 months. Since 1977, however, the Department has paid compensation where payments have been delayed for more than 52 weeks as a result of clear and unambiguous departmental error. Back payments of invalid care allowance, up to December 1984, made following the retrospective extension of the allowance to married and cohabiting women in June 1986, do not fall within the scope of the compensation scheme.

Bradford Investments

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will announce his decision about the application of benefit to mortgage agreements between Bradford Investments and house occupiers in Bolton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 20 November 1987]:* I understand that there is some question as to whether the housing costs of people who have the particular agreements with Bradford Investments are eligible for supplementary benefit or for housing benefit. It is for the independent adjudicating authorities to decide on the former and for the relevant local authority on the latter. The issue is being given urgent consideration and I hope that a decision will be made shortly.

AIDS

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which voluntary organisations have received grants as part of the Government's AIDS prevention and education campaign; and how much each organisation has received.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 October 1987, c. *190-91*]: I regret that this did not make clear a distinction between voluntary organisations which have already received grants and those for which applications for support are still under consideration. The latter group includes the British Association for Counselling, Accept Services UK Ltd, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau and St. Catherine's Hospice. In addition, while the Government are committed to provide substantial financial support to the National AIDS Trust, the amount has not yet been decided.

The Brook Advisory Service grant should have read £3,800.

Agency Doctors and Nurses

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he imposes a ceiling on the rates paid to agencies for *(a)* nurses and *(b)* junior hospital doctors by the National Health Service.

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place a maximum limit on the amount paid to individual agency nurses and doctors employed by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* When health authorities employ agency nursing staff they must follow Departmental guidelines which permit them to pay nurses agencies a maximum calculated on the mean of the appropriate NHS nursing and midwifery staff's pay scale for the grade plus the agencies' commission and the employer's national insurance contribution.

We have not imposed a ceiling on the rates paid to agencies who supply junior hospital doctors; but health authorities are advised to confine their use of such agencies to those complying with a voluntary code of practice issued in 1980, a copy of which is in the Library. This advises authorities to have regard to the rates of pay for directly employed staff, as determined on the basis of recommendations by the review body on doctors' and dentists' remunerations, when agreeing terms with agencies. I am aware that discussions aimed at reducing expenditure on medical agency staff are taking place within Trent, Yorkshire, Northern, Mersey, West Midlands and the four Thames regional health authorities. Officials are planning to meet representatives of the profession and senior National Health Service management to consider the issues involved.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the legal implications of the proposed use by the railways board of British Rail pension funds to make good a shortfall of £525 million in its accounts.

Mr. David Mitchell: I know of no shortfall of £525 million in the accounts of the British Railways Board. The management committee of the British Rail pension scheme is responsible for the management of the funding of that scheme.

M25

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost to date, in 1986-87 prices, of the construction of the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Total expenditure in cash terms to the end of October 1987 on constructing the M25 has been £990 million. To provide an equivalent figure in 1986-87 prices would require revaluation of past expenditure to constant prices. Central records for past spending on some of the earlier sections of the road do not distinguish between years. It is not possible to obtain such information except by a manual search of files at disproportionate cost.

Aircraft Near Misses

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the ratio of near misses to take-off and landings involving commercial aircraft at Britain's airports *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* in 1976.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For 1976, one in 18,700; 1986, one in 70,600.

Bus Deregulation (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to announce his decision regarding bus deregulation in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 9 November at column *5*.

Rail Electrification (Scotland)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive proposals from the British Railways Board regarding the further electrification of railway lines in Scotland.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR is considering the possibility of electrifying one of the lines between Edinburgh and Glasgow: if it establishes that there is a worthwhile case I am sure it will bring it forward. I understand it has no other plans for electrifying lines in Scotland.

Taxis (Wheelchair Passengers)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many London taxis are equipped to take a passenger in a wheelchair; and how many will be able to do so by this time in 1988.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 1 October 1987 there were 173 London taxis equipped to carry a wheelchair. The Public Carriage Office has estimated that the number might have doubled by this time next year.

Driving Tests (Basildon)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people in Basildon took driving tests in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Driving test applications are not recorded in a way to make the information available.

Foreign Lorries

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign lorries entered the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not collect data on lorries entering the United Kingdom but surveys all vehicles leaving the country by ferry. The figure for foreign lorries over 3·5 tonnes gross weight leaving the country in 1986 was 302,000. The statistics for the first three quarters of 1987 and previous years are contained in the Department's quarterly statistical bulletin—"Road Goods Vehicles on Roll-on Roll-off Ferries to mainland Europe". Copies are in the Library.

Public Transport (LDDC)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to seek to improve public transport services in that part of the London Docklands development corporation area which is in the London borough of Southwark.

Mr. David Mitchell: The provision of public transport services in London is the responsibility of London Regional Transport. The future development of public transport in the docklands and surrounding areas is the subject of a study sponsored jointly by London Regional Transport and the London Docklands development corporation which is expected to be completed shortly.

Rural Transport

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to encourage an increase in the availability of transport in rural areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport Act 1985 provided bus operators with the freedom to run services to meet customer needs. Local authorities have powers to subsidise socially necessary services which cannot be provided commercially. In addition, the Act introduced two new grants to encourage rural services. The rural transport development fund, administered by the Development Commission has £1 million a year for innovative projects and it has currently not exhausted the funds available this year. So far, 80 such projects have been approved. Rural bus grant, currently worth 5p per mile, is available to operators running services in rural areas.

Motorways

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the installation of photographic equipment on motorways to register the speeds of vehicles and the distances between them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department and the police already use photographic equipment for research, and surveys of motorway traffic including measuring speeds of vehicles and distances between them. Use of such equipment for enforcement purposes is under consideration as part of the review of road traffic law.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by local highway authority in England *(a)* the provision for expenditure in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper and *(b)* the forecast outturn at the time of the Autumn Statement for (i) capital spending on non-trunk roads and car parks in 1987-88 and (ii) current spending on non-trunk road maintenance in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 1987 public expenditure White Paper provision in respect of 1987-88 for:

capital expenditure in England on non-trunk roads and parking is £617 million; and

current expenditure in England on non-trunk road maintenance is £1,264 million

No breakdown of these plans is made by individual highway authority as individual authorities decide their levels of expenditure and priorities. The information available, at the time of the autumn Economic Statement, on authorities' expenditure in 1987-88 is as follows:

£ million

	1st quarter capital expenditure—non-trunk roads & parking	*Local authority budgets for non-trunk road maintenance in the year.*
Avon	0·612	24·593
Bedfordshire	0·512	10·294
Berkshire	1·719	9·038
Buckinghamshire	1·446	13·682
Cambridgeshire	0·449	14·347
Cheshire	0·146	27·216
Cleveland	0·572	14·444
Cornwall	0·600	13·894
Cumbria	0·078	14·410
Derbyshire	1·230	20·005
Devon	1·521	32·253
Dorset	2·184	16·293
Durham	1·155	14·442
East Sussex	1·282	14·602
Essex	2·610	30·085
Gloucestershire	1·112	11·213
Hampshire	2,060	26·781
Hereford & Worcester	1·074	14·006
Hertfordshire	0·511	20·789
Humberside	0·924	22·551
Isle of Wight	0·348	3·230
Kent	1·805	29·710
Lancashire	2·032	37·416
Leicestershire	1·350	19·841
Lincolnshire	1·403	17·287
Norfolk	0·956	16·851
Northamptonshire	1·173	9·544
Northumberland	0·190	9·895
North Yorkshire	1·849	19·877
Nottinghamshire	0·845	18·527
Oxfordshire	0·348	9·590
Salop	0·230	9·810
Somerset	0·580	12·556
Staffordshire	0·841	18·313
Suffolk	0·812	14·432
Surrey	2·705	16·965
Warwickshire	0·252	10·420
West Sussex	1·431	13·985
Wiltshire	0·495	13·850
City of London	0·425	4·832
Camden	not known	5·915
Greenwich	0·356	4·198
Hackney	0·178	3·181
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·001	not known
Islington	not known	3·108
Kensington and Chelsea	0·005	5·044
Lambeth	0·030	3·945
Lewisham	0·048	7·768
Southwark	0·241	1·201
Tower Hamlets	0	8·194
Wandsworth	1·038	5·254
Westminster	1·238	8·012
Barking and Dagenham	0·042	3·976
Barnet	0·157	8·932
Bexley	0·936	4·771
Brent	0·125	3·081
Bromley	0·622	8·933
Croydon	0·073	8·531
Ealing	0·664	4·420
Enfield	2·349	5·999
Haringey	0·587	1·589
Harrow	0·122	4·174
Havering	0·759	4·615
Hillingdon	0·801	5·859
Hounslow	0·127	3·492
Kingston-upon-Thames	1·064	2·846
Merton	0·126	5·199
Redbridge	0·399	5·151
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·124	4·815
Sutton	0·284	3·969
Waltham Forest	0·452	4·336
Bolton	0·081	4·551
Bury	0·050	4·317
Manchester	not known	10·173
Oldham	0·025	5·195
Rochdale	0·021	3·119
Salford	1·269	3·512
Stockport	0·177	4·173
Tameside	0·076	4·121
Trafford	1·167	5·814
Wigan	0·541	6·831
Knowsley	0·122	5·638
Liverpool	0·072	12·889
St. Helens	0·218	4·136
Sefton	0·079	8·936
Wirral	0·107	5·109
Barnsley	0·064	3·705
Doncaster	0·273	9·236
Rotherham	0·377	8·013
Sheffield	0·311	10·924
Gateshead	0·205	5·419
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·148	8·184
North Tyneside	0·026	5·409
South Tyneside	0·235	5·225
Sunderland	0·254	6·910

	1st quarter capital expenditure—non-trunk roads & parking	*Local authority budgets for non-trunk road maintenance in the year.*
Birmingham	0·607	21·158
Coventry	0·328	7·296
Dudley	0·135	5·221
Sandwell	0·237	6·893
Solihull	0·124	4·590
Walsall	0·393	3·938
Wolverhampton	0·528	5·241
Bradford	0·584	8·498
Calderdale	0·058	7·712
Kirklees	0·309	8·289
Leeds	0·312	14·908
Wakefield	not known	8,768

All England £73·556 million.

On the basis of this information the present estimated outturn figure for all highway authorities in England is £47 million for capital expenditure on non-trunk roads and parking. Forecasting methods cannot reliably be used at individual authority level and estimates may change as later data becomes available. Local authorities' budgets for current expenditure on non-trunk road maintenance total £1,117 million but final outturn may differ.

Train Crash (Colwich Junction)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the progress of the inquiry into the fatal train crash at Colwich junction, Staffordshire, in September 1986 and as to the likely publication date of the report.

Mr. David Mitchell: The inquiry into the collision between two express passenger trains at Colwich junction is nearing completion, but certain technical investigations are still in progress. It is hoped to complete the report early in the new year and then to publish it with the minimum delay.

Docklands Light Railway

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the percentage reliability figures for the Docklands light railway since it has been operated from August.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Docklands light railway is in its first quarter of operation. Indicators of service similar to those available for the London underground will be published in due course.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the provision of effective electronic warning signs on major roads leading to the Woolwich ferry indicating whether or not the service is in operation; what consideration he is giving to such installations in view of the present unreliable service; and when he expects to make a decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have had two letters from the public. The department has had discussions with Newham and Greenwich. The electronic signs on the north side are out of action. We are considering with Newham the costs of replacing them to see if it is justified. On the south side the cost of providing signs on the large number of approaches would not be justified in normal circumstances. The best way forward is for a solution to be found to the current dispute. This will avoid the need for such signs.

King's Cross Station

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Region Transport he will raise with him the question of the cuts in staffing planned for King's Cross station; if he will make it his policy to provide funding for any capital expenditure recommended by the inquiry into the fire at King's Cross as being necessary to prevent a recurrence of the disaster there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 19 November at column 1207.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 24 November 1987

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he has received any communication from the French Government indicating whether French binary chemical weapons will be stored outside France;

(2) if he has had any communication from the United States Government indicating whether the production of United States binary chemical weapons is due to commence;

(3) if he has had any communication from the French Government indicating whether the production of French binary chemical weapons has begun.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no communication from either the United States or French Governments about the production or storage of French binary chemical weapons.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact on the production of new chemical weapons by the United States of America and France of current negotiations at Geneva.

Mr. Eggar: We and all our NATO allies remain committed to a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on chemical weapons. There has been encouraging progress this year in the chemical weapons negotiations at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Iran

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the plight of the Baha'i community in Iran; if he will make representations to the Government of Iran on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The continued persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran remains a cause of grave concern to us.

For the last five years we have co-sponsored the resolution on human rights in Iran at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). These resolutions urged the Iranian Government to respect the human rights standards set out in the instruments to which they are a party. We will continue to raise the issue of the persecution of the Baha'is and other religious minorities in Iran at every suitable opportunity — bilaterally, in concert with our European partners and at the United Nations.

Uranium

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he has had any recent communication with the French Government over the alleged sale of plutonium and enriched uranium from facilities in the European Economic Community on the black market in Khartoum;

(2) if he has had any recent communications with the Belgian Government over the alleged sale of plutonium and enriched uranium from facilities in the European Economic Community on the black market in Khartoum;

(3) if he has had any recent communication with the West German Government over the alleged sale of plutonium and enriched uranium from nuclear facilities in the European Economic Community on the black market in Khartoum.

Mr. Eggar: This has been discussed in the course of regular official contacts with the French, Belgian and German Governments. These discussions have confirmed our view that there is no evidence to support the allegations that weapons grade nuclear material has been on sale on the black market in Khartoum or elsewhere.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communication he has had with the Government of the Sudan about civil nuclear materials from European Economic Community countries allegedly illegally sold on the black market in Khartoum.

Mr. Eggar: We have had no direct contact with the Government of Sudan on this matter. However, we understand that there have been contacts between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Government of Sudan and that the International Atomic Energy Authority has no evidence to confirm the allegation of a black market in weapons grade nuclear material in Khartoum.

PRIME MINISTER

Libya

Q21. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to meet Colonel Gaddafi to discuss an improvement in relations between the United Kingdom and Libya.

The Prime Minister: No.

Scotland

Q33. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Prime Minister when she last made an official visit to Scotland; who were the principal persons she met; and what subjects were discussed.

The Prime Minister: I last made an official visit to Scotland in September 1987. I visited a number of establishments, including housing schemes, colleges, research institutes and companies in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere.

Hazelbury Bryan

Q74. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Hazelbury Bryan.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Hackney

Q105. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Hackney.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Gwynedd

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Gwynedd.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

"Web of Deception"

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Prime Minister if the book "Web of Deception", written by Mr. Chapman Pincher, was vetted before publication.

The Prime Minister: The manuscript was shown to the Government by the publishers. The Government sought and obtained agreement to certain deletions. The Government also reminded the author's solicitors of the terms of the injunction against certain newspapers restraining publication of material from Mr. Peter Wright. The Government made it clear that they in no way authorised or approved publication of the book or confirmed its contents as true or accurate.

Research and Development

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Prime Minister when the 1987 "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development" will be published.

The Prime Minister: The 1987 "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", the fifth in the series, will be published through Her Majesty's Stationery Office on Wednesday 25 November. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the House of Commons Library. The annual review, which was introduced to give an overview of Government funded research and development, will inform the work of the strengthened central machinery for establishing science and technology priorities announced in the White Paper, "Civil Research and Development" (Cmnd. 185) in July 1987.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Clamping

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vehicles were clamped in central London in the first 12 months of the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Metropolitan police began wheelclamping on 16 May 1983. On 1 December 1986 they contracted out the physical work associated with wheelclamping. The table below shows the number of vehicles wheelclamped by the Metropolitan police in each year up to contracting out, and the number clamped since contracting out was introduced:

Vehicles wheelclamped

Period	*Number*
1983 (from 16 May)	26,808
1984	44,101
1985	34,810
1986 (up to 30 November)	26,028
1 December 1986 to 8 November 1987	107,709

The City of London police began wheelclamping on 20 October 1986. Between that date and 31 October 1987, 3,202 vehicles were wheelclamped.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the reasons why journalists identified by either a membership and press card issued by the National Union of Journalists or credentials issued by the Metropolitan police are being denied access to the Central Criminal Court during the hearing of the appeal in connection with the Birmingham pub bombings, despite the court not being full; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arrangements for the admission of journalists to the Central Criminal Court are made by the Commissioner of Police for the City of London in consultation with the court administrator. I understand from the commissioner that journalists who possess either press passes validated by the police or letters of authority from their editors are able to gain access to the Central Criminal Court.

Crime (Leeds)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the crime detection rate for each year since 1979 in the Leeds metropolitan district council area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The statistics which are collected centrally on notifiable offences recorded and cleared up relate to entire police force areas, and are published in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales" (tables 2.18 and

2.19 of the issue for 1986, Cm. 233) copies of which are in the Library. The clear-up rate in West Yorkshire was 38 per cent. in 1986.

Nuclear Power Plants

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has undertaken any research or commissioned an outside body to do research on the civil defence implications of an attack made on civil nuclear power plants or reprocessing plants in the United Kingdom by terrorists or in wartime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Plans exist for the security of these installations in peace and war.

Soliciting

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there have been changes in the patterns of cautioning and sentencing for soliciting since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Criminal Justice Act 1982 removed imprisonment as a penalty for soliciting. Between 1982 and 1986, the total number proceeded against or cautioned remained much the same. A fall in the number of cautions from 7,900 in 1982 to 4,900 in 1986, was offset by an increase in the number of prosecutions from 6,100 to 9,400. In 1982, 190 offenders were sentenced to immediate imprisonment and 80 committed in default of payment of a fine. In 1986, 210 offenders were committed for fine default. The use of probation or supervision orders has fallen by 74 per cent.

AIDS

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of anxiety over the spread of AIDS and the Government's pronouncements, he proposes to ensure there is an ample supply of condoms in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to do so.

Michael Ryan (Firearms)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to what firearms the late Michael Ryan possessed prior to obtaining a firearms certificate;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley on all firearms or traces of firearms that were found near the home of the late Michael Ryan at Hungerford, on or after 19 August.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 20 November 1987]*: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to *(a)* the time that the first report of an armed offender in Hungerford on 19 August was received by the police, *(b)* the time that armed officers were called to the scene, *(c)* the location and activity of each of the groups of armed police at the time of the call, *(d)* the places from which armed police drew firearms prior to attending the scene, *(e)* the time of arrival of each police officer at the scene and the places to which they were deployed, *(f)* the time at which armed police officers from other forces were offered for use, and their deployment, *(g)* the time at which the late Michael Ryan is known to have ceased shooting at members of the public and *(h)* the time of arrival and deployment of unarmed police and the effect they had in containing the situation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 20 November 1987]*: I understand that the chief constable of the Thames Valley police will be submitting a full report on the incident to his police authority meeting on 27 November, that it will answer most if not all of the questions raised by the hon. Member and that it will be made publicly available. I will ensure that copies are placed in the Library.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to details of inquiries made by or on his behalf before a firearms certificate was issued to the late Michael Ryan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 20 November 1987]*: I understand from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police that the inquiries carried out prior to the issue of the certificate were in accordance with normal police practice.

"Holocaust News"

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take action against the publishers of an alleged historical journal called "Holocaust News" under the Race Relations Act; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I have been asked to reply.

The publication has been examined by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and he has concluded that it does not, in his view, contravene the law.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

David Baveghens

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Attorney-General why the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the case against David Baveghens, who was subsequently convicted in a private prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General *[pursuant to his reply, 3 November 1987, c. 621]*: The Director of Public Prosecutions has today issued the following statement:

"It is plain that the CPS can only prosecute on the basis of the evidence supplied by the police.

On 27th October, Donald Baveghens was found guilty at Wimbledon Magistrates' Court and remanded on bail until today. On 28th October, certain remarks attributed to the Police Federation and to the Chairman of its Metropolitan Police Branch were reported in the Press. I have refrained from responding whilst the matter has remained sub judice. I would now like to draw attention to the following facts.

On 20th February 1987, Baveghens appeared before Wimbledon Magistrates' Court, charged with a number of offences including assault occasioning actual bodily harm on PC Prescott, committed on 12th February.

The papers that were subsequently submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service included a statement from PC Prescott, dated 14th March. The evidence contained in that statement was not sufficient to support the charge of assault that had been preferred. The senior representative of the CPS dealing with the matter spoke on a number of occasions to the Police, pointing out the defects in the evidence. Following an indication that Baveghens intended to contest the charge of

assault, a written memorandum was sent to the Police on the 14th April, indicating the weaknesses in the evidence that was then available and stating in terms that if no further evidence was forthcoming, the charge would be withdrawn on 21st April when the defendant was next due to appear before the court.

The following day, 15th April, a senior police officer attended the CPS offices and discussed the matter in detail with the CPS representative. Again, the defects in the evidence were pointed out.

By the 21st April, no further evidence had been supplied to the CPS and the charge was accordingly withdrawn.

Thereafter, PC Prescott commenced a private prosecution, by a summons issued on 15th May. On 18th May the CPS was provided with a copy of a further fuller statement from PC Prescott. This statement was dated 21st April, the day on which the charge had been withdrawn.

The CPS utterly condemns any assault on a police officer particularly where injury is caused, and is determined to take the appropriate action in any such case. To suggest that the CPS pursues a policy of not prosecuting in such cases is wholly without foundation but this case illustrates vividly how vital it is that the CPS be furnished in proper time with the evidence that is required to support criminal proceedings."

I have considered the circumstances of this case carefully. I am satisfied that, despite repeated requests, the evidence made available by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service on 21 April was not sufficient to support the charge preferred, and that the decision to withdraw it was correct.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total wage bill for the electricity supply industry for each year since 1975.

Mr. Parkinson: Total staff costs of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales in each year since 1975-76 were as follows:

	£ million
1975-76	670·4
1976-77	728·9
1977-78	777·7
1978-79	931·8
1979-80	1,125·0
1980-81	1,420·8
1981-82	1,616·4
1982-83	1,642·5
1983-84	1,726·2
1984-85	1,754·5
1985-86	1,842·5
1986-87	1,958·7

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the financial obligations of the Central Electricity Generating Board arising from the 1975 White Paper; and what additional non-statutory financial obligations have been placed on the board since that date.

Mr. Parkinson: The policy set out in the 1978 White Paper on nationalised industries was that industries should be set financial targets supplemented by a cash limit on external financing requirements for the current financial year and the publication of key performance indicators. In relation to future performance, industries should publish suitable performance aims. The current financial target set for the CEGB is an average return of 2·7 per cent. on average net assets (calculated on a current cost basis) for the three years ending 31 March 1988. The CEGB contributes to the performance aim and external financing repayment which are agreed with the ESI for the industry as a whole.

No additional non-statutory financial obligations have been placed on the CEGB.

Nuclear Accidents

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had about contingency plans in the event of an accident from a nuclear power station with elected representatives of local authority associations; when they took place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My officials have held extensive consultations with local authority officials and members of the emergency services, as part of the review of nuclear emergency planning announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 18 December, at columns 612-13 and 30 June, at columns 65-67. My right hon. Friend Lord Belstead met elected representatives of the local authority associations on 22 September to discuss the arrangements for the establishment of a national monitoring network to cater for the consequences of a nuclear accident occuring either overseas or within the United Kingdom.

TRANSPORT

M62 (Detour)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce the detour for traffic using the M62 between south Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A study has just been completed into the feasibility of providing a new link road from the M1 south of Wakefield to the M62 east of Huddersfield. We are at present considering the results.

It is too early to predict the outcome. If we can identify an economically viable scheme it will be considered for inclusion in the next review of the national roads programme.

MOT Tests

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will take steps to link garages licensed to administer the MOT test to the driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea;

(2) if he will amend the conditions attached to MOT certificates so that they *(a)* show mileage, *(b)* are displayed on the vehicle, *(c)* accommodate 10 years of embossed garage stamps and *(d)* are recorded at the driver and vehicle licensing centre.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: MOT certificates already show mileage. A certificate must be produced to obtain a vehicle excise licence at each subsequent licensing after a test has first become due. Licences are displayed on vehicles. I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestions in the context of my discussions next month with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, the Director General of Fair Trading and others.

Mileage Clocking Fraud

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to seek to reduce mileage clocking fraud.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Mileage clocking fraud is a long-standing problem. There is no easy solution. It is one of a number of problems in the motor trade which I will be discussing next month with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, The Director General of Fair Trading and others.

Commissioners for Irish Lights

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sums have been paid in the last two years by his Department to the Commissioners for Irish Lights to assist them in meeting redundancy payments.

Mr. David Mitchell: The commissioners' costs are met not by my Department, but by the General Lighthouse Fund, with my right hon. Friend's consent. No payments in respect of redundancy were made in 1985-86 or 1986-87, but IR £59,270 have been paid in the current financial year so far.

Uttoxeter Bypass

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when an announcement can be expected as to whether Staffordshire county council's application for transport supplementary grant for the Uttoxeter bypass, due to start construction in the financial year 1990-91, has been successful.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to announce details of the 1988-89 transport supplementary grant settlement shortly.

M1-A1 Link

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, following the publication of his decision on the proposed M1-A1 link, he now proposes to fund a study into the implications of the M1-A1 link for traffic in east and central Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's recent study of the traffic problems on the road network to the east of Leeds has provided us with the information that we need to formulate proposals for future truck road schemes in that area.

Docklands Light Railway

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library *(a)* the original contract and *(b)* all subsequent contractual agreements between London Regional Transport and Mowlem/GEC in respect of the docklands light railway.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. this is a matter of commerical confidentiality between London Regional Transport and GEC/Mowlem.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much profit has been made on the operation of the docklands light railway to date; and on what it has been spent.

Mr. David Mitchell: The docklands light railway is forecast to make a small operating loss in this its first year of operation.

Bridges

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his proposals for the strengthening of older bridges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of bridges on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads will include the assessment and strengthening of older bridges to ensure that they can safely carry modern heavy lorries for the foreseeable future. We repeat the assurances previously given that unless Parliament so decides there will be no increase in the maximum weight of lorries allowed into this country. We could not do this in any case until our roads and bridges could carry the loads. We are proposing a 15-year programme and the most cost effective way of proceeding is to provide for strengthening to cope with lorries up to the EC weight limits of 40 tonnes overall weight and 11·5 tonne axle weights rather than the 38 tonne and 10·5 tonnes, our present limits, which should have no more than a marginal effect on the rehabilitation programme.

We shall be holding discussions with owners of bridges off the national road system to follow up their comments on the results of the bridge census and sample survey which was published in the spring.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the profit or loss incurred by the dock labour scheme in each port where it is in operation for each year since its inception.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

Full information of the type requested is not available without a disproportionate use of time and effort. I have given figures for five of the major ports in the country for selected years since 1970. These are all statutory harbour authorities falling within the scope of the dock labour scheme.

Dock labour scheme ports profit and loss—1970-85

	1970 £	*1975* £	*1980* £	*1985* £
Port of London Authority	−1,994,000	−8,381,000	−12,508,000	−1,566,000
Port of Bristol Authority	−349,000	−114,000	−7,640,000	−4,030,000
Medway Ports Authority	+11,000	+264,000	+20,000	+2,457,000

	1970 £	1975 £	1980 £	1985 £
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company	−3,028,000	−100,000	−3,717,000	+2,404,000
Manchester Ship Canal Company	+393,000	+1,704,000	−979,000	+2,058,000

Source of information, "Department of Transport Statistics" 1970, 19765, 1980, 1985.

WALES

Classical Studies

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many maintained secondary schools in each local education authority area in Wales teach Latin;

(2) how many maintained secondary schools in each local education authority area in Wales teach classical studies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Figures are not available in the form requested. Information obtained from the 1984 secondary school staffing survey, however, indicates that the following numbers of maintained secondary schools taught a classical language and/or classical studies respectively:

	Classical languages	Classical studies
Clwyd	4	1
Dyfed	15	7
Gwent	21	9
Gwynedd	9	8
Mid Glamorgan	17	8
Powys	5	2
South Glamorgan	9	4
West Glamorgan	13	6

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, at columns *521-3*, regarding households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge, he will give figures of the estimated amount of money gained by gainers and lost by losers.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is estimated that both gains and losses from the full introduction of the community charge would each amount to £42 million, net of rebates.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of community charge would need to be levied in each district of Wales to produce the equivalent revenue to that currently raised by rates.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the estimates of "Community charges including safety net" contained in my answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 24 July at columns *643-44*.

Schools (Expenditure)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the capital allocation for expenditure on schools in 1987-88 made by his Department to each local education authority in Wales;

(2) what was the bid made by each Welsh local education authority to his Department for a capital allocation for expenditure on schools for 1987-88.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Under the system introduced in 1985-86, local authorities receive a formula-based capital allocation covering most of their services, including education. They no longer make bids for these services, nor are individual service elements of the allocation identifiable.

Planning (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what guidance his Department has offered to local planning authorities on when they may consider the Welsh language as a factor in decisions relating to planning permission;

(2) to what extent, in deciding on appeals against decisions of local planning authorities, he considers the Welsh language as a factor relating to his decisions.

Mr. Grist: No formal guidance has been given but local planning authorities are aware that it is a requirement on them when considering planning applications and on my right hon. Friend and his inspectors in considering planning appeals that they have regard to all material considerations. Policies which relate to the character and way of life of a community, including the needs and interests of the Welsh language, may properly be among those considerations.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any of the appeals which he has allowed against local planning authorities decisions to refuse planning permission involved decisions which had originally included the needs and interests of the Welsh language amongst the provisions of considerations material to the decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information could not be made available except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to require local planning authorities to include the needs and interests of the Welsh language within the provisions of their development plans and local plans.

Mr. Grist: The protection of the character and way of life of communities is a proper aim of statutory planning, and language can be a component of that aim. My right hon. Friend has already advised local planning authorities that, in preparing both structure and local plans, authorities will wish to consider the relationship of planning policies and proposals to social needs and problems, including their likely impact on different groups in the population.

Regional Aid

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on regional aid to

industry in Wales, in each differing category of aid and in each financial year since 1978-79 both at current and outturn prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance, and regional development grants, for the financial years 1978-79 to 1986-87 at outturn and constant prices is as follows:

£ million

	Outturn Prices			*Constant 1986-87 Prices*		
	RSA	*RDG*	*Total*	*RSA*	*RDG*	*Total*
1978-79	30·3	71·5	101·8	59·0	139·1	198·1
1979-80	18·8	50·7	69·5	31·3	84·4	115·7
1980-81	10·7	103·5	114·2	15·0	145·3	160·3
1981-82	9·2	122·2	131·4	11·8	156·3	168·1
1982-83	15·5	121·5	137·0	18·5	144·9	163·4
1983-84	18·2	72·1	90·3	20·7	82·2	102·9
1984-85	25·1	92·7	117·8	27·4	101·2	128·6
1985-86	28·0	84·4	112·4	28·8	86·9	115·7
1986-87	35·6	88·7	124·3	35·6	88·7	124·3

Education Reform

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will arrange for copies of all responses to the consultation documents on grant maintained schools, admission of pupils to maintained schools and financial delegation to schools to be deposited in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am arranging for copies of the responses from organisations to these consultation documents to be deposited in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit the Welsh plant breeding farm at Gogerddan during the next six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I hope to visit the Welsh plant breeding station at Gogerddan and the experimental husbandry farm at Trawsgoed in the near future.

Redundancies

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies have notified him of redundancies in Wales since June 1979; and what is the total number of jobs lost.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* Information on the number of companies notifying redundancies is not collected centrally.

There were 52,413 redundancies notified to the Manpower Services Commission between June 1979 and December 1980. Since the latter date, when the basis for collecting the figures changed, notifications have been as shown in the following table:

	Number
1981	36,432
1982	24,647
1983	16,041
1984	11,441
1985	15,027
1986	11,357
[1]1987	3,259
Total	118,204

[1] to September.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Flood Damage (Coal Stockpile)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the stockpile of coal donated to help those who suffered flood damage in Northern Ireland on 21 and 22 October will be distributed; to whom; and to what areas.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The stockpile of coal, so generously donated by British Coal, has now all been distributed to each household directly affected by the flooding within the Omagh urban and the Strabane district council areas. The coal was distributed by three voluntary organisations — the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Age Concern and the British Red Cross —and the work was co-ordinated jointly by the Western Health and Social Services Board and the Omagh and Strabane district councils.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Research Assistants

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Lord Privy Seal whether he will take steps to ensure that all research assistants employed by hon. Members register any research work or thesis preparation which they are pursuing alongside their duties to hon. Members, on behalf of or in pursuit of, their studies at an educational establishment or university.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the resolution of the House of 17 December 1985 in respect of research assistants required the registration of only "any relevant gainful occupation". Any extension of this requirement would need to be considered by the Select Committee on Members' Interests and agreed to by the House.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Free School Meals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the total number of children receiving free school meals in each year since

1983; and if he will estimate the number of children receiving free school meals after the Social Security Act is implemented.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested on the take-up of free shcool meals in England since 1983 is available in the "Annual School Meals Census", reports on which are available in the Library. Information was not collected in 1985 because of the teachers' dispute.

The estimated number of children in England expected to receive free meals on implementation of the Social Security Act 1986, when it comes into force in April 1988, is about 800,000.

Micro-computers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many micro-computers are estimated to be in *(a)* schools and *(b)* prisons for prison education purposes; at what cost to his Deprtment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are some 112,000 micro-computers in educational use in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools in England. These have been funded from a variety of sources; there have been no direct costs to this Department. In 1988-89 the Department will make grants in support of £8·5 million of expenditure by LEAs on micro-computer systems for use in schools.

Education in prisons is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Special Education Needs

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines his Department issues in regard to the making of statements under section 7 of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: Guidance on the making of statements of special educational need is contained in DES circular 1/83, which contains advice on aspects of the Education Act 1981 and on the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983.

Conductive Education

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide local education authorities with a summary of the reasons why his Department has given £326,000 for research that will evaluate conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. The Department is providing the grant in the hope that the research will provide a clear understanding of the effectiveness of conductive education, as well as monitoring how well it transposes from Hungary to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have approached him for advice on the value of conductive education; and what was his response.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no record of any such approach from a local education authority.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has given local education authorities about conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: None. I shall keep in mind the need for guidance to be given to local education authorities, although it may be necessary to await the outcome of Birmingham university's research evaluation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has gained from Her Majesty's inspectors of education regarding the value of conductive education; and what information he has as to whether any of the inspectors giving advice had invited the Peto Institute in Hungary.

Mr. Dunn: It is not the practice to publish the advice given by Her Majesty's inspectorate to my right hon. Friend on particular issues; no member of the inspectorate has visited the Peto institute.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will request those external to his Department who have advised him on the value of conductive education to inform the Foundation for Conductive Education of their ideas;

(2) which people or organisations, external to his Department, have provided him with advice about the value of conductive education; and if he will indicate in each case what information he has as to whether the source of the advice had visited the Peto institute in Budapest.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not sought advice from any sources outside central Government. Several people have written to the Department in support of conductive education, including some who have visited the Peto institute.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the Birmingham project providing conductive education on an experimental basis will have the resources which, in preparation to the number of children involved, will match those provided by the Hungarian Government for conductive education in Hungary, so that the success of the method in Britain relative to Hungary may be effectively researched.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is providing £326,000 to enable Birmingham university to carry out a research evaluation of the Birmingham project; it would not be appropriate for the Department to be involved both in the experimental project and in its evaluation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department will call a one-day conference for experts and interested observers, for the purpose of presenting research papers and discussing the value of conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: Not at present. Such a conference might be of value when some conclusions are available from the National Foundation's conductive education project in Birmingham, and from the evaluation which the University of Birmingham is undertaking.

Teacher Training

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to amend the

arrangements and criteria for the approval of courses of initial teacher training set out in his Department's circular 3/84.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Courses of initial teacher training are currently being reviewed against the published criteria by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. With the agreement of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Wales I have recently extended the term of appointment of the members of the council to the end of 1989. I am grateful to the chairman and members of the council for their work to date and for agreeing to continue to serve.

I intend before the end of the lifetime of the present council to review the criteria for the approval of courses set out in circular 3/84 in the light of the council's experience and advice, and to consider also what should be the future arrangements for the review and approval of courses of initial teacher training. I shall initiate consultations for these purposes at the appropriate time.

In the meantime, however, I am concerned that the criteria should present no barrier to the widest possible recruitment of suitable candidates to initial training. In this context, the requirement that at least 75 per cent. of the students entering any course of initial teacher training should possess the normal academic qualifications for entry to a degree course—defined in circular 3/84 in terms of A-levels or the equivalent—may not take sufficient account of the variety of routes to higher education that are now generally recognised, including in particular the greater use of vocational qualifications and the development of "access" courses, to which the White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" (Cm.114) drew attention earlier this year. I am, therefore, telling the council that pending the general review of the criteria referred to above I shall be prepared to consider recommendations from it for the approval of courses of initial teacher training that do not comply with the requirement described above, where the council is satisfied that the course in question is nevertheless of the high quality required. I shall then take account of the experience of such cases when I review the criteria.

DEFENCE

Burghfield

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state in relation to his Department's establishment at Burghfield, Berkshire *(a)* its purpose, *(b)* its Ordnance Survey map reference, *(c)* the number of people employed, and *(d)* the safety arrangements in operation for the protection of both workers and people living around it.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield is involved in the British nuclear weapons procurement programme. Its Ordnance Survey reference is SU675680. For reasons of national security, it is not our policy to disclose either the number of staff employed at the site or the safety arrangements in operation. I can, however, assure the hon. Gentleman that rigorous health and safety arrangements exist to protect both employees at the establishment and members of the public.

Radiation

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to institute changes in working practices at AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield as a result of the National Radiological Protection Board report "Interim Guidance on the Implications of Recent Revisions of Risk Estimates"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 23 October 1987]:* Prudent management in the design of facilities and in the formulation of operating procedures at AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield means that the National Radiological Protection Board interim guidance is met already.

Consequently, although safety policy is the subject of continuous review, on this occasion no immediate changes in working practices are planned.

Submariners

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average amount of time that submariners spend at sea each year.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 October 1987]:* When serving in an operational submarine a man spends on average five and a half months of the year at sea.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Falklands

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the Overseas Development Administration budget in 1986-87 was attributable to expenditure on the Falklands.

Mr. Chris Patten: The proportion of the gross aid programme in 1986-87 attributable to expenditure to the Falkland Islands was 0·8 per cent. The gross aid programme includes aid to countries and national and international institutions.

Sugar Production

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of his aid budget is currently used to help Third world countries diversify their agriculture away from sugar production.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid statistics are not collated on a basis which would enable aid for diversification from sugar, in particular, to be identified. Bilateral project aid for the natural resources sector as a whole has increased by 75 per cent. over the last five years. This is designed to enhance production on the basis of developing countries' comparative advantage.

European Development Fund

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain the agreement of the other member states of the EEC to convert past aid loans from the European development fund to the poorest countries into grants.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid from the European development fund to the poorest countries has been provided almost

wholly in the form of grants, not loans. Conversion into grants would not therefore be helpful to these countries. However, the EC Development Council agreed on 9 November 1987 that over the next two years receipts of interest and capital up to a level of 60 million ecu (about £42 million) on past EDF loans that would otherwise have been credited to the member states will instead be provided as grants to the poorest and most indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa which are pursuing appropriate economic adjustment policies. The Council also agreed that other EDF funds should be provided for the same purpose.

EMPLOYMENT

British Tourist Authority

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the British Tourist Authority, and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Fowler: I last met the chairman of the British Tourist Authority on 22 July. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for Tourism last me him in this capacity on 9 September. Similar topics were discussed on both occasions. I stressed the Government's commitment to the tourism industry and listened with interest to the views of both the chairman and the board of the authority on the problems and opportunities facing the industry.

Community Programme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many entrants to the community programme since 1 October have been *(a)* unemployed for 12 months or more, *(b)* unemployed for two years or more, *(c)* under 25 years, *(d)* aged 25 to 50 years and *(e)* over 50 years.

Mr. Lee: Information on the characteristics of entrants to the community programme since 1 October 1987 is not yet available.

Disabled People

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available on the number and proportion of disabled workers employed by individual firms.

Mr. Lee: Information supplied by individual firms about the number and proportion of registered disabled workers they employ has been treated by successive Governments as confidential and is not disclosed without their agreement.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the proposed changes to the community programme will allow disabled people to gain maximum benefit from the opportunities which the community programme offers.

Mr. Lee: Project-based provision will be included within the new training programme for unemployed adults announced on 18 November. The Manpower Services Commission has been asked to provide detailed proposals for the programme's operation and this should include proposals for disabled people.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the average weekly net pay for workers employed in sheltered workshops, and the average weekly net pay for workers employed on the sheltered placement scheme.

Mr. Lee: Comprehensive statistical information is not available. A sample survey of wages paid in April 1986 suggested that the average net weekly pay of people with severe disabilities employed in sheltered workshops was £67, and £62 for those employed under the sheltered placement schemes.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people are currently registered as unemployed.

Mr. Lee: There were 21,429 unemployed registered disabled people in Great Britain registered for employment at jobcentres on 2 October 1987. The number of registered disabled people who are unemployed claimants at unemployment benefit offices is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the annual flows *(a)* on to and *(b)* off the unemployment register (excluding school leavers) in each calendar year since 1980; and if he will also give these figures for each standard region of Britain.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows for each region of Great Britain the annual flows in to and out of the unemployed count, excluding school leavers, for each year since 1983. This information is based on the count of unemployed claimants and is available only from October 1982.

Annual totals, excluding school leavers[1]

Region	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
In flows				
South East	634,546	635,853	674,570	692,317
East Anglia	125,588	127,015	141,939	145,911
London	550,735	541,299	574,091	609,798
South West	307,308	314,363	338,656	357,829
West Midlands	370,857	363,032	380,565	390,060
East Midlands	268,441	270,971	281,993	289,841
Yorkshire and Humberside	363,805	369,004	398,458	407,823
North West	525,833	512,717	530,897	544,677
Northern	266,560	269,562	277,660	282,390
Wales	212,473	214,059	229,187	234,531
Scotland	443,402	448,560	470,041	490,495
Great Britain	4,069,548	4,066,435	4,298,057	4,445,672

Region	1983	1984	1985	1986
Out flows				
South East	648,363	620,004	675,035	718,949
East Anglia	129,106	125,212	138,720	149,253
London	535,572	520,830	564,592	629,156
South West	314,527	303,322	334,635	371,380
West Midlands	396,771	363,949	389,883	412,203
East Midlands	274,019	262,546	283,242	297,541
Yorkshire and Humberside	380,149	360,887	392,956	424,630
North West	532,163	514,119	539,190	573,285
Northern	278,827	264,687	281,206	300,283
Wales	222,713	208,184	229,859	251,642
Scotland	453,352	448,489	471,490	492,747
Great Britain	4,165,562	3,992,229	4,300,808	4,621,069

Note—The figures are not fully comparable over the periods shown due to changes in coverage. In particular, the outflows in 1983 were affected by the provisions of the 1983 Budget which meant that many older men no longer needed to sign on in order to get their benefits.

[1] School leavers are those under 18 years of age who have not entered employment since completing full time education. These flow figures do not balance with the changes in total adult unemployment. This is because the latter are also affected by unemployed school leavers who reach the age of 18 and are then classified as adults.

Librarians

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek powers to instigate a programme of positive discrimination to increase the number of women holding the position of chief librarian.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Employers in the library service, as in other areas of employment, are bound by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to afford equal opportunities to women and men. If women take advantage of the opportunities available to them there is no reason why more should not progress to hold the post of chief librarian, when such posts fall vacant.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will establish guidelines to ensure equal opportunities for women as chief librarians.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts already provide a comprehensive legislative framework for the elimination of sex descrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities, including in the employment field. If any woman feels that she has been unlawfully discriminated against, she has the right to seek redress by making a complaint to an industrial tribunal.

The Government commend to all employers, including those in the library service, the sensible practical advice contained in the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice on employment.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to monitor the workings of the Equal Opportunities Act to ensure that there is a positive attempt to equate the sexes in the library services.

Mr. Nicholls: Sex discrimination in employment is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts. The Government already monitor the general working of these Acts. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Commission has a statutory responsibility for advising the Government on the working of the Acts.

Hotels

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of hotel rooms which have been lost to the tourist industry by their use as housing for homeless persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No statistics are available on the number of hotel rooms which have ceased to accommodate tourists. The London tourist board has, however, drawn my attention to the problems experienced by tourists in finding suitable accommodation in London in the budget price range. The board has also expressed concern about the number of hotel rooms being occupied by homeless families.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the revenue lost to the tourist industry as a result of hotel rooms being used to house homeless persons.

Mr. Lee: I have no information on what revenue could have been lost.

Benefit Premium Scheme

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details regarding the new benefit premium scheme to be introduced for community programme workers; and which benefits will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Lee: The community programme and other adult training programmes are being brought into a new training programme for long-term unemployed people. The Manpower Services Commission has been asked for detailed proposals for the programme's operation.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to monitor how many unemployed people undergoing a restart interview thereby secure full-time employment.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The aim of the restart interview is to help unemployed people into employment by selecting the best way open to them from a wide range of employment, and job search opportunities available.

It is not possible to say how many of those people interviewed ultimately find full-time jobs, since we do not follow up every participant.

ENVIRONMENT

Listed Building Control

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to put before the House the order relating to limiting the ecclesiastical exemption from listed building controls.

Mr. Moynihan: Work is in hand on drafting an order following agreements reached with Church bodies last year during the passage of the Housing and Planning Act 1986. Some further consultation on the details may be necessary before the order can be laid.

Agricultural Tenancies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for amending legislation on agricultural tenancies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our proposals on agricultural tenancies are contained in the Housing Bill which received its First Reading on 19 November. The Bill provides that future tenancies granted to agricultural workers would generally be assured agricultural occupancies on terms similar to other new-style assured tenancies, and with similar statutory protection. The grounds for possession from an assured agricultural occupant would be broadly the same as those for an assured tenant. In addition, where a farmer wished to regain possession of his property from an assured agricultural occupant to house an incoming worker, the services of the Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee could be used. Existing tenants whose tenancies are governed by the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 will continue to enjoy the protection of that Act.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has sent to the national campaign for the homeless in relation to its representations to him about rental purchase tenure in the north of England.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have arranged for copies of the response to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Sports Council

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Sports Council facilities have been taken over by charitable trusts in the last 12 months.

Mr. Moynihan: One. The sale of the national sailing centre at Cowes to the Lister Charitable Trust was completed recently, following the Sports Council's review of the management of the national sports centres. The trust now operates a sailing school at the centre.

Rateable Values

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those purposes for which rateable values of domestic property are used other than for raising revenue.

Mr. Howard: As part of the preparation for the forthcoming rate reform legislation, a large number of statutory references to rateable value have been identified which are not primarily related to local government finance. It is intended to provide for the amendment of those provisions either in the forthcoming legislation or other appropriate legislation. If my right hon. Friend has a particular concern, perhaps he would write to me.

Stud Farms

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the rating of stud farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his decision shortly.

East Deane Local Plan

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to appoint an inspector in respect of the East Deane local plan.

Mrs. Roe: The Secretary of State for the Environment has now appointed an inspector to hold a public local inquiry into the East Deane local plan. The inquiry will open at 10 am on Wednesday 3 February 1988 at the principal committee room, Deane house, Belvedere road, Taunton.

Moorland

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations from the Exmoor Society, the Open Spaces Society, or any other bodies connected with the environment, planning or farming, regarding the planning laws on applications to cultivate areas of moorland within national park boundaries.

Mr. Moynihan: Conversion of moorland for agricultural purposes is not normally subject to planning control but various bodies have responded to the Government's consultative proposals for landscape conservation orders.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, as part of his Department's policy on the diversification of land uses, he has given or expects to give guidance to planning authorities regarding their response to applications to cultivate moorland within national park boundaries.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Councillors

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to end the practice whereby councillors disbarred from holding public office as councillors are permitted to hold office as members of valuation panels and to hear rating appeals.

Mr. Chope: This is one of the issues that we shall be considering, in consultation with interested bodies, in framing the regulations governing the proposed valuation and community charge tribunals.

Rating Reform

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average poll tax bill in England and Wales that is likely to be faced by a young single person with an annual income of £2,500.

Mr. Howard: Without comprehensive knowledge of the person's circumstances which would govern their entitlement to rebate, it is not possible to say.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *190*, he will seek the permission of organisations which gave written support to the introduction of the poll tax to list their names and addresses.

Mr. Howard: No. The names of the organisations that responded to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) are listed in the summary placed in the Library on 15 December 1986, should the hon. Member wish to approach them directly.

Housing

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons were *(a)* in local authority funded bed-and-breakfast accommodation and *(b)* on local authority waiting lists for housing in each of the districts in Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, on 31 March 1983, 1985 and 1987.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities report the numbers of households that they have temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation under the homeless provisions of the Housing Acts: most of these households will have at least part of their costs met either by the authorities or by the Department of Health and Social Security. Figures for the end of June 1983, March 1985 and March 1987 appear in table 9 in issues No. 68, 75 and 82, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics", which are available in the Library.

The numbers of households on the housing waiting list at 1 April were reported in local authorities' housing investment programme returns and the figures appear in column B51 of the "HIP 1 (1987) All items print": the figures for April 1985 can be derived from the numbers at April 1986 and the changes since 1985 which appear in columns B51 and B53 of the "HIP 1 (1986) All items print": both these documents are available in the Library. Information for earlier years was not collected centrally.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest number of houses in need of urgent repair in Leeds West; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Roe: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of people on housing waiting lists in each district authority area in Yorkshire, for each year since 1979 to the latest available date.

Mrs. Roe: The number of households on waiting lists at 1 April 1986 and 1 April 1987 was provided by local authorities in their housing investment programme returns; the figures appear in column B51 of the "HIP 1 All items print" for 1986 and 1987 which are in the Library. Figures for 1 April 1985 may also be derived from the 1986 return; column B52 of the "All items print" gives the change in the number of households on the waiting list since 1 April 1985. Information for earlier years is not available centrally.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the figures for house building by public and private sectors in *(a)* Yorkshire as a whole and *(b)* Leeds metropolitan district council for each year from 1979 to the latest available date.

Mrs. Roe: Public and private sector housebuilding starts in the Yorkshire and Humberside region for the years 1979 to 1986 appear in table 6.4 of "Housing and construction Statistics 1976-1986" and figures for the first half of 1987 are in table 1.3 of the quarterly "Housing and construction Statistics" No. 30.

Annual figures for Leeds appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics":

Year	*Issue Number*	*Table Number*
1979	53	4
1980-83	73	1
1984	77	1
1985	81	1
1986	82	1

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Some 221 public and 746 private starts and 299 public and 731 private completions were reported for the first half of this year.

Local Government

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will place in the Library examples of the type of material of a party political nature, in breach of the code of practice in the Local Government Act 1986, which he intends to prohibit by means of the Local Government Bill currently before the House.

Mr. Howard: Local authorities are prohibited, by virtue of section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986, from publishing any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. The code of recommended practice to be issued under section 4 of the Act will be concerned with publicity material a local authority is permitted to issue; it will set out principles of good practice which local authorities will (if Parliament approves the Local Government Bill) have to have regard to in all their publicity decisions.

Rate Rebates

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, what data from the family expenditure survey and what formula were used to calculate the estimates given relating to poorer households and rate rebates.

Mr. Howard: The estimates are produced by a computer-based tax and benefit model developed by the Institute of Fiscal Studies which analyses separately information from the family expenditure survey for each of 28,750 households. The hon. Member may like to approach the institute for a copy of its working paper 58/87, "The IFS Tax and Benefit Model", which describes main features of the model.

Pollution

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been taken for pollution incidents in rivers as a result of agricultural activities in 1986 and so far in 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: A report published by the Water Authorities Association in August this year, "Water Pollution from Farm Waste 1986: England and Wales", indicated that 128 prosecutions were brought in 1986 in respect of farm pollution incidents. A copy of this report is lodged in the Library of the House. Figures are not yet available for 1987.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has recently commissioned research into alternative methods of sewage sludge disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Yes. The Department does commission research directed to safer sludge treatment and disposal. Current research projects in this category are:

The effects of sludge applications on the long-term structure and fertility of soils.

Investigation of techniques for the removal of pathogens from sludge.

Appraisal of full-scale sludge treatment processes for the destruction of pathogens in sludge.

The effects of heavy sludge applications on prominent grassland.

The effects of pH variation on the uptake of metals by different crops grown on sludge-amended soils.

Effects of sea disposal of sludge on the concentration of contaminants in sediments, benthic fauna and crustaceans.

Study of the cycling of sludge particles in the marine food chain.

The mobility of organic compounds in sludge applied to agricultural soils and their rate of uptake by crops.

Study of the growth of algae in coastal waters close to a site for sea disposal of sludge.

Grant-related Expenditure Assessment

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what basis the GREA formula factor for domestic refuse collection in widely scattered rural areas is calculated to equalise needs as compared with urban areas with less unproductive journey time per collection;

(2) what is the nature of the extra domestic refuse collection cost in urban areas, which the net daily population inflow factor in the GREA formula is intended to reflect.

Mr. Chope: The main determinant of the GRE for refuse collection is the number of domestic premises in an authority's area. Commercial and industrial premises are not counted since authorities are assumed to cover the cost of collecting trade refuse by charging. Allowance is made for additional costs in rural areas by including the size of an authority's area in the GRE formula. Similarly, allowance is made for additional costs in urban areas by using a density of population factor. In addition, people who work in a different authority from their area of residence are assumed to increase the need for domestic refuse collection in both areas.

The relative importance of each of these factors is determined through regression analysis of the actual costs of refuse collection by each local authority.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether regression analysis is employed to calculate existing costs as between rural and urban areas, for the purpose of fixing GREA multipliers.

Mr. Chope: Regression analysis is used to determine a number of GRE components. Many of them allow for higher costs in some rural areas through the use of sparsity of population factors, and for higher costs in some urban areas through population density factors. Details are given in the publication "Grant Related Expenditure 1987/88", a copy of which is in the Library.

Urban Programme

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the urban programme and the derelict land reclamation programme achieved in 1986-87; and what steps have been taken to improve their operation and performance.

Mr. Trippier: Copies of reports on the operation and achievements of the urban programme and the derelict land reclamation programme in England in 1986-87 have been placed in the Library of the House. The two reports describe how the resources available under each programme were used, explain recent improvements in management and monitoring and highlight examples of best practice.

Newcroft Drive, Stretford

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* advice given to Trafford borough council about action to be taken concerning land at and near Newcroft drive, Stretford, in the event that the local authority failed to develop it; if he will list those bodies, including hon. Members, who have written to him on this issue; what recent letters have been sent to local residents or others; and what these letters said.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* In the light of a proposal by Trafford borough council to develop land at Newcroft drive, Urmston, for a social services resource centre and municipal housing, my right hon. Friend decided on 29 June 1987 not to proceed with his earlier intention to direct the disposal of the land. The borough council, having now failed to approve planning applications for its own development, has been advised informally that the Secretary of State will wish to reconsider his attitude.

Only Mrs. C. Ryder, of the Newcroft Park action group has corresponded with the Department about this matter since 29 June 1987, her particular concern being the Secretary of State's likely attitude if the local authority were to designate the site as public open space. She has been informed that the Department cannot say at present what the Secretary of State might decide in relation to the possibility of a direction to dispose. A decision will be taken in due course having regard to all the circumstances and the individual merits of the case.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has recently received from the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the conservation of ancient woodlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 November 1987]:* I have received no such reports.

THE ARTS

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what was the expenditure by his Department for the year 1983-84, specifying separately the amounts *(a)* spent on capital projects and *(b)* for revenue purposes by bodies sponsored by his Department;

(2) what is the estimated expenditure by his Department for the year 1987-88, specifying separately the amounts *(a)* spent on capital projects and *(b)* for revenue purposes by bodies sponsored by his Department;

(3) what was the expenditure by his Department for the year 1986-87, specifying separately the amounts *(a)* spent on capital projects and *(b)* for revenue purposes by bodies sponsored by his Department;

(4) what was the expenditure by his Department for the year 1985-86, specifying separately the amounts *(a)* spent on capital projects and *(b)* for revenue purposes by bodies sponsored by his Department;

(5) what was the expenditure by his Department for the year 1984-85, specifying the amounts *(a)* spent on capital projects and *(b)* for revenue purposes by bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question on Tuesday 10 November at column *136*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Job Creation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his best estimate of the number of full-time equivalent jobs created as a result of the cuts in income tax in his last Budget.

Mr. Major: It has not been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish quantitive estimates of the effects of the Budget on employment.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the value added tax treatment of hospital radio equipment.

Mr. Lilley: Since the beginning of 1987 my right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about VAT treatment of hospital radio equipment.

Third-world Debt

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last discussed the problems of Third-world debt with his counterparts from the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 29 October at column *393*.

SCOTLAND

Glaucoma

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the total number of sufferers of the eye disease glaucoma who have come to the attention of his Department, *(b)* the total cost to his Department of treating this condition and *(c)* the cost per patient of the eye test which would indicate the possibility of glaucoma, for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During 1985, the last full year for which information is available, 1,793 patients diagnosed as suffering from glaucoma were discharged after spells of in-patient care. Information on the cost of treating this condition is not available. The use of ophthalmoscopy, which can detect glaucoma, is already part of the routine NHS sight test. It is open to practitioners to carry out any other tests judged to be appropriate in individual cases. I have no information on the costs of the various tests for glaucoma.

Cervical Cytology Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the report of the scientific advisory group into the cervical cytology service in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 16 November 1987 at col. *259*.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Edinburgh council of social service about Lothian health board membership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Edinburgh council of social service have written once to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and twice to the Scottish Home and Health Department about the membership of Lothian health board. It has been explained to the council that appointments to boards are at the discretion of Ministers, who seek nominations from a wide range of interests and take into account the experience required of members and the contribution likely to be made by those nominated. As the membership of boards is limited by statutory instrument, there will always be some particular areas of the community, whether in geography or interest, which are not directly represented.

Scottish Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what remuneration the current chairman of the Scottish Sports Council receives; and how many days per month he is expected to devote to the business of the Scottish Sports Council.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Mr. Miquel has allocated one full day a month for council meetings and is generally

available to discuss Scottish Sports Council matters at other times. At his own request, he is receiving no remuneration.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he received and from whom, and what consultations he carried out and with whom, before he made the appointments to the Scottish Sports Council which were announced on 14 November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: These appointments reflect discussions which I had with the chairman-designate, Mr. Raymond Miquel, in which the views of the retiring chairman, Mr. Peter Heatly, were also taken into account. The usual formal consultations with Government colleagues were then undertaken before a decision was announced.

Ration and Registration Documents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for all district councils in Scotland the total allocated number of packets of *(a)* standard food ration documents, *(b)* temporary food ration documents and *(c)* registration documents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Standard food ration and registration documents are held by my Department for issue to district councils in Scotland on the basis of one per head of their population, plus a small additional percentage for contingencies. Temporary food ration documents have been allocated sufficient to cover 10 per cent. of the population. Allocations will be reviewed from time to time and varied as necessary.

Reckless Driving

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of section 1 prosecutions for reckless driving heard in each regional authority area in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of persons prosecuted under Section 1(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1972

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Region/Islands Area					
Borders	1	—	1	1	—
Central	2	1	1	1	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	1	—	3
Fife	3	2	3	3	—
Grampian	3	3	1	8	5
Highland	1	3	—	2	8
Lothian	6	4	1	4	7
Strathclyde	11	13	11	9	9
Tayside	4	4	1	3	1
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	2	—	—
Scotland	31	31	22	31	33

Road Accidents

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of fatal accident inquiries relating to deaths in road accidents held in each regional authority area in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures, in so far as they can be ascertained, are only available for the number of such fatal accident inquiries which have been held subsequent to deaths which occurred in 1985 and 1986. The information is set out in the table.

Regions	*Number of Fatal Accident Inquiries held as a result of deaths occurring in:* *1985*	*1986*
Highland	1	2
Grampian	5	0
Tayside	1	6
Fife	0	1
Lothian	1	1
Central	0	3
Borders	1	1
Dumfries and Galloway	2	1
Strathclyde	15	8
Orkney	0	0
Shetland	0	0
Western Isles	0	0

Wages

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many workers in Scotland earn less than £116 a week or £3 per hour;

(2) how many full-time working women in Scotland earn less than £116 a week or £3 per hour.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 15 July 1987, at column *500*.

Employment (Women)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women are in full-time employment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The number of female employees in full-time employment in Scotland in June 1987 is estimated at 502,000.

Rating Reform

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there is to be a national business rate in Scotland when the poll tax proposals go into operation in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No, although the extension to Scotland of such a rate remains my right hon. and learned Friend's objective. As the first stage in the reform of non-domestic rates in Scotland, increases in the non-domestic rate poundages set by local authorities will, under section 3 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, be subject to an index-linked ceiling from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it remains his intention to introduce a uniform business rate in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The extension to Scotland of a uniform business rate set by the Government is my right hon. and learned Friend's objective, and the first step towards this will be the harmonisation of valuation practice north and south of the border.

Community Care

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made by health boards and local authorities in implementing joint finance schemes for community care; how much has been spent of the projected sums; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of joint financing in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Joint financing is appropriate where a health board and a local authority have a long-term operational commitment to a jointly managed project providing services which both have a statutory power to promote. The terms on which NHS and local authority finance may be used for jointly planned and managed projects is, subject to the normal arrangements for meeting NHS and local authority capital expenditure, a matter for individual health boards and local authorities and detailed information on expenditure is not held centrally.

Support finance is appropriate for projects which provide services which are the statutory responsibility of local authorities but which have been identified under joint planning procedures as being likely to make a significant and cost-effective contribution to the discharge of a health board's responsibilities. From 1 May 1985 responsibility for the operation of support finance schemes was transferred to health boards. Each year the Scottish Home and Health Department indicates how much it expects each board to commit to support finance purposes. These indicative levels are neither maximum nor minimum levels and boards are free to choose their own level of funding to support such projects. The figures for the first two years of the revised arrangements are:

£ million

All Health Boards	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Indicative level	6·05	6·095
Payments towards projects	2·85	[1]3·83

[1] Provisional figure.

Thus, after a slow start, there was a marked increase in Health board expenditure on support finance in 1986–87. I will continue to encourage boards to devote more resources to such schemes and to bring their expenditure up to their indicative levels.

Local authority financial returns do not identify separately the local authority's expenditure on such schemes.

Animals (Radioactivity)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the level of radioactivity in *(a)* fish in lochs, *(b)* hares and rabbits and *(c)* other animals in south-west Scotland; and what assessment has been made on the cumulative effect of all paths in the food chain on the level of radioactivity in humans.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *(holding answer 23 November 1987):* Information on the level of radioactivity in fish and animals resulting from the Chernobyl accident in Scotland is published on a regular basis by my Department. For the south-west of Scotland the measured levels in 1987 for fish range from six becquerels per kilogram to 4,232 becquerels per kilogram, for hare from 165 becquerels per kilogram to 4,530 becquerels per kilogram and for rabbits 20 becquerrels per kilogram to 155 becquerels per kilogram. Levels in deer range from six becquerels per kilogram to 1,686 becquerels per kilogram.

As assessment of doses to the population of Scotland through all exposure pathways is included in a report produced by the National Radiological Protection Board entitled "A Preliminary Assessment of the Radiological Impact of the Chernobyl Reactor Accident on the Population of the European Community" and in a report produced by the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development entitled "The Radiological Impact of the Chernobyl Accident in OECD Countries".

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been conducted into homes in multiple occupation by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *(holding answer 23 November 1987):* Three research projects relevant to houses in multiple occupation have been carried out by or on behalf of the Scottish Development Department in recent years.

In 1982 a report, "Shared Housing for Single People", was published by the Department; this contains the results of a social and design evaluation of purpose-designed, shared housing for single people in Edinburgh. The research was funded by the Department.

In 1984 the Department issued a report "Housing for Single People, Shared Accommodation and Hostels" as part 7 of the Scottish Housing Handbook (HMSO 1984). This examines the need for housing for single people and suggests ways of providing such accommodation.

In 1986, the Department produced a report on research into local authority policies and procedures for controlling and regulating houses in multiple occupation.

Rents

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average weekly rent level for local authority accommodation in each district authority in Scotland for each year 1979 to 1987; and what was the annual increase expressed in cash and percentage terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* Statistics on rents are routinely published, most recently in Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSIU No. 29, "Public Sector Rents in Scotland 1986-87", a copy of which is in the Library.

The information requested on average weekly rents by district and percentage change for the years 1979 to 1987 is set out in the following tables. The annual change in cash terms for the same period was provided in my answer to the hon. Member on 12 November at columns *268-272*.

Annual average local authority rents (as at 30 September)

Local authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[2]1987*
Scotland	255·61	305·73	400·07	469·03	512·56	543·94	600·53	675·49	761·99
Berwickshire	305·26	360·84	463·54	572·63	600·43	662·98	715·92	748·55	799·20
Ettrick and Lauderdale	272·79	306·42	334·66	527·88	572·13	687·47	683·44	683·42	721·35
Roxburgh	300·98	355·07	491·87	591·77	645·72	698·60	765·22	851·96	881·43
Tweeddale	224·18	315·41	432·98	546·35	588·99	586·57	589·84	660·12	683·59
Clackmannan	240·18	277·08	373·63	485·00	532·78	582·79	606·54	668·82	755·08
Falkirk	205·44	276·12	347·59	466·01	529·01	555·41	603·91	652·09	723·33
Stirling	228·32	296·92	357·52	406·41	482·57	482·92	600·43	708·44	786·47
Annandale and Eskdale	275·63	331·76	444·81	530·90	607·59	671·12	720·38	791·63	850·04
Nithsdale	199·18	249·39	369·51	455·49	499·06	545·86	596·80	683·01	729·20
Stewartry	270·64	341·83	497·84	619·77	657·90	725·94	732·74	803·37	858·47
Wigtown	253·63	318·67	443·50	555·31	623·29	736·91	820·96	868·00	861·04
Dunfermline	249·28	298·41	440·62	553·01	606·54	632·11	631·98	699·71	768·62
Kirkcaldy	241·34	292·63	420·27	499·75	543·46	603·37	654·98	720·11	809·25
North East Fife	257·11	360·43	496·98	585·48	662·10	659·74	718·76	825·30	890·02
Aberdeen	245·93	292·04	310·46	361·69	411·75	462·53	583·00	652·80	762·55
Banff and Buchan	267·15	283·99	401·54	517·82	585·23	646·27	717·41	778·99	798·77
Gordon	320·19	347·24	427·76	528·97	593·40	619·29	709·00	775·30	811·05
Kincardine and Deeside	229·47	277·95	391·93	491·81	547·06	613·46	676·57	720·09	744·64
Moray	277·70	353·10	403·74	458·63	538·23	605·10	706·04	729·66	835·24
Badenoch and Strathspey	257·65	340·11	438·72	513·50	599·29	653·27	702·06	798·00	798·36
Caithness	217·78	261·22	358·10	437·18	502·86	62·20	657·83	711·90	776·48
Inverness	295·83	331·33	447·03	509·46	548·20	586·62	686·12	729·07	828·70
Lochaber	230·47	246·22	427·97	553·79	590·63	638·47	675·05	742·93	833·88
Nairn	251·90	271·24	390·25	518·53	584·16	631·82	703·79	763·51	830·80
Ross and Cromarty	266·11	325·87	429·09	507·13	559·03	623·66	662·03	765·72	823·72
Skye and Lochalsh	258·04	364·90	419·74	541·49	576·20	677·00	775·52	890·76	892·54
Sutherland	289·28	328·07	453·35	509·23	559·66	615·00	665·62	736·71	753·64
East Lothian	253·68	296·60	379·69	444·81	532·07	576·99	644·13	694·47	767·67
Edinburgh	339·15	396·74	496·10	573·84	638·58	703·61	694·41	696·16	808·29
Midlothian	247·44	297·68	373·99	469·31	514·72	560·00	615·38	663·29	729·53
West Lothian	226·84	275·33	425·32	507·35	545·21	571·12	612·48	656·84	720·43
Argyll and Bute	283·05	357·38	506·21	615·59	698·51	759·71	796·44	796·09	863·13
Bearsden and Milngavie	285·28	304·10	460·10	532·98	565·20	595·40	632·94	739·97	865·44
Clydebank	209·56	282·18	366·11	443·10	469·95	521·97	633·96	782·23	900·79
Clydesdale[1]	238·76	315·74	390·28	479·69	503·84	556·56	631·90	677·00	719·14
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	254·62	328·74	464·21	526·61	526·33	551·88	662·52	766·92	856·77
Cumnock and Doon Valley	208·92	265·19	387·85	460·03	514·30	540·31	577·62	631·98	713·98
Cunninghame	268·58	268·96	371·50	416·77	459·67	460·05	460·24	546·03	679·35
Dumbarton	209·00	244·15	389·59	442·32	445·32	487·50	487·96	607·12	761·22
East Kilbride	240·85	337·28	433·89	549·02	594·23	646·75	701·40	808·46	858·69
Eastwood	267·14	315·14	441·88	517·70	546·95	572·09	597·97	620·96	646·67
Glasgow	277·36	335·46	436·25	473·26	499·91	500·61	553·62	655·46	762·19
Hamilton	216·70	252·79	325·40	430·69	485·07	521·59	569·55	665·51	774·29
Inverclyde	275·14	308·13	379·64	406·28	432·27	472·28	587·39	644·98	691·88
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	228·02	296·69	413·83	445·98	472·21	498·48	550·89	645·80	721·74
Kyle and Carrick	274·05	275·58	325·07	446·88	499·60	541·92	633·27	695·29	746·12
Monklands	228·06	271·77	341·65	433·81	483·78	483·78	588·79	711·25	806·67
Motherwell	226·77	270·61	384·60	411·30	463·29	515·46	585·81	647·96	732·72
Renfrew	230·41	277·44	373·94	421·18	433·17	458·37	510·22	597·98	676·96
Strathkelvin	225·64	295·32	444·33	479·63	503·80	549·46	604·07	737·54	799·80
Angus	246·10	266·08	417·52	470·82	558·27	608·62	658·31	716·18	765·80
Dundee	263·91	307·18	307·12	377·38	419·45	457·42	510·59	604·63	706·75
Perth and Kinross	208·38	269·62	398·19	548·28	560·35	560·18	620·32	672·31	723·97
Orkney Islands	293·99	350·79	412·50	484·99	526·34	572·89	684·52	753·43	838·87
Shetland Islands	246·78	291·01	415·87	542·17	549·80	547·17	698·55	778·23	829·31
Western Isles	276·86	373·92	492·98	630·11	678·11	773·80	804·68	857·76	910·73

[1] Prior to 1980 this was Lanark District.
[2] Estimated figures for 1987 lifted from CIPFA Rating Review publication.

Annual average local authority rents (as at 30 September)
Percentage increase/decrease

Local authority	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86[2]*	*1986-87*
Scotland	19·61	30·86	17·24	9·28	6·12	10·40	12·48	12·81
Berwickshire	18·21	28·46	23·53	4·85	10·42	7·99	4·56	6·77
Ettrick and Lauderdale	12·33	9·22	57·74	8·38	20·16	−0·59	0·00	5·55
Roxburgh	17·97	38·53	20·31	9·12	8·19	9·54	11·34	3·46
Tweeddale	40·69	37·28	26·18	7·80	−0·41	0·56	11·92	3·56
Clackmannan	15·36	34·85	29·81	9·85	9·39	4·08	10·27	12·90
Falkirk	34·40	25·88	34·07	13·52	4·99	8·73	7·98	10·92
Stirling	30·05	20·41	13·67	18·74	0·07	24·33	17·99	11·01
Annandale and Eskdale	20·36	34·08	19·35	14·45	10·46	7·34	9·89	7·38
Nithsdale	25·21	48·17	23·27	9·57	9·38	9·33	14·45	6·76

Local authority	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86[2]	1986-87
Stewartry	26·30	45·64	24·49	6·15	10·34	0·94	9·64	6·86
Wigtown	25·64	39·17	25·21	12·24	18·23	11·41	5·73	−0·80
Dunfermline	19·71	47·66	25·51	9·68	4·22	−0·02	10·72	9·85
Kirkcaldy	21·25	43·62	18·91	8·75	11·02	8·55	9·94	12·38
North East Fife	40·19	37·89	17·81	13·09	−0·36	8·95	14·82	7·84
Aberdeen	18·75	6·31	16·50	13·84	12·33	26·05	11·97	16·81
Banff and Buchan	6·30	41·39	28·96	13·02	10·43	11·01	8·58	2·54
Gardon	8·45	23·19	23·66	12·18	4·36	14·49	9·35	4·61
Kincardine and Deeside	21·13	41·01	25·48	11·23	12·14	10·29	6·43	3·41
Moray	27·15	14·34	13·60	17·36	12·42	16·68	3·35	14·47
Badenoch & Strathspey	32·00	28·99	17·05	16·71	9·01	7·47	13·67	0·05
Caithness	19·95	37·09	22·08	15·02	21·54	7·63	8·22	9·07
Inverness	12·00	34·92	13·97	7·60	7·01	16·96	6·26	13·67
Lochaber	6·83	73·82	29·40	6·65	8·10	5·73	10·06	12·24
Nairn	7·68	43·88	32·87	12·66	8·16	11·39	8·48	8·81
Ross and Cromarty	22·46	31·68	18·19	10·23	11·56	6·15	15·66	7·57
Skye and Lochalsh	41·41	15·03	29·01	6·41	17·49	14·55	14·86	0·20
Sutherland	13·41	38·19	12·33	9·90	9·89	8·23	10·68	2·30
East Lothian	16·92	28·01	17·15	19·62	8·44	11·64	7·82	10·54
Edinburgh	16·98	25·04	15·67	11·28	10·18	−1·31	0·25	16·11
Midlothian	20·30	25·63	25·49	9·68	8·80	9·89	7·79	9·99
West Lothian	21·38	54·48	19·29	7·46	4·75	7·24	7·24	9·68
Argyll and Bute	26·26	41·64	21·61	13·47	8·76	4·84	−0·04	8·42
Bearsden and Milngavie	6·60	51·30	15·84	6·05	5·34	6·31	16·91	16·96
Clydebank	34·65	29·74	21·03	6·06	11·07	21·46	23·39	15·16
Clydesdale[1]	32·24	23·61	22·91	5·03	10·46	13·54	7·14	6·22
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	29·11	41·21	13·44	−0·05	4·85	20·05	15·76	11·72
Cumnock and Doon Valley	26·93	46·25	18·61	11·80	5·06	6·91	9·40	12·99
Cunninghame	0·14	38·12	12·19	10·29	0·08	0·04	18·64	24·42
Dumbarton	16·82	59·57	13·53	0·68	9·47	0·09	24·42	25·38
East Kilbride	40·04	28·64	26·53	8·23	8·84	8·45	15·26	6·21
Eastwood	17·97	40·22	17·16	5·65	4·74	4·38	3·84	4·14
Glasgow	20·95	30·05	8·48	5·63	0·14	10·59	18·40	16·28
Hamilton	16·65	28·72	32·36	12·63	7·53	9·20	16·85	16·35
Inverclyde	11·99	23·21	7·02	6·40	9·26	24·37	9·80	7·27
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	30·12	39·48	7·77	5·88	5·56	10·51	17·23	11·76
Kyle and Carrick	0·56	17·96	37·47	11·80	8·47	16·86	9·79	7·31
Monklands	19·17	25·71	26·97	11·52	0·00	21·71	20·80	13·42
Motherwell	19·33	42·12	6·94	12·64	11·26	13·65	10·61	13·08
Renfrew	20·41	34·78	12·63	2·85	5·82	11·31	17·20	13·21
Strathkelvin	30·88	50·46	7·94	5·04	9·06	9·94	22·10	8·44
Angus	8·12	56·92	12·77	18·57	9·02	8·16	8·79	6·93
Dundee	16·40	−0·02	22·88	11·15	9·05	11·62	18·42	16·89
Perth and Kinross	29·39	47·69	37·69	2·20	−0·03	10·74	8·38	7·68
Orkney Islands	19·32	17·59	17·57	8·53	8·69	19·65	10·07	11·34
Shetland Islands	17·92	42·91	30·37	1·41	−0·48	27·67	11·41	6·56
Western Isles	35·06	31·84	27·82	7·62	14·11	3·99	6·60	6·17

[1] Prior to 1980 this was Lanark District.
[2] Estimated figures for 1987 lifted from CIPFA Rating Review publication.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what return he expects to receive on the outstanding borrowing from him by the South of Scotland Electricity Board over the next 10 years; and what effect he estimates that such a return would have on electricity charges made by the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that it expects to make the following payments of interest and principal for national loans fund borrowing to date:

£ million

	Interest	Principal
1987-88	74·815	56·368
1988-89	74·959	55·888
1989-90	69·194	49·068
1990-91	63·941	47·648
1991-92	58·661	46·248
1992-93	53·531	44·988
1993-94	48·484	42·828
1994-95	43·634	40·778
1995-96	38·962	38·768
1996-97	34·477	36·408

Tariffs are a matter for the board's commercial judgment, taking into account a wide range of factors affecting its operations, including the need to service and repay debt.

Power Stations (Insurance)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate for (i) nuclear power stations and (ii) other power stations the total insurance cover held by the South of Scotland Electricity Board in respect of *(a)* damage to property owned by the board, *(b)* potential claims by employees of the board and *(c)* potential claims by third parties; and what is the cost of this insurance cover in each case.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The information, provided by the South of Scotland Electricity Board, is as follows.

The annual cost to the board of insurance for nuclear power stations is £3·87 million. This provides the following cover:

(a) Damage to board property: £350 million aggregate annual loss limit, with an uninsured excess of £5 million for each and every loss;

(b) Claims by board employees: £20 million aggregate annual claims for each nuclear site (see footnote); and

(c) Claims by third parties: included in the £20 million aggregate annual cover specified at *(b)*.

For non-nuclear power stations and other board property, the annual cost of insurance is £710,000. This provides the following cover:

(a) Damage to board property: £75 million loss limit for each and every claim, with an uninsured excess of £5 million;

(b) Claims by board employees: £50 million loss limit for each and every claim, with an uninsured excess of £5 million; and

(c) Claims by third parties: £50 million loss limit each and every claim with an uninsured excess of £5 million.

Note: Any claims in excess of a nuclear site operator's liability, and up to a sterling equivalent of 300 million special drawing rights (currently about £227 million) would be met from public funds. Beyond that, the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (as amended) provides that claims shall be satisfied to such extent and out of funds provided by such means as Parliament may determine.

Nuclear Power Stations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate what financial provision has been made by the South of Scotland Electricity Board to cover the final decommissioning of all its nuclear power stations.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that at 31 March 1987, it had made financial provision of £182·614 million for the decommissioning of its nuclear power stations.

Rate Fund Contributions

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions he intends to impose on rate fund contributions to the housing revenue accounts of each local housing authority and for the whole of Scotland; and if he will give an estimate of the impact of these restrictions on rents in both local and national terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The provisional statutory rate fund contribution limits for 1988-89 announced recently by my right hon. and learned Friend are set out in the table below. Local authorities have until 4 December to make representations about these limits. Final decisions on rate fund contribution limits will be taken later in December and the necessary statutory instrument will be laid before Parliament early in 1988.

Responsibility for setting rent levels lies with the individual local authorities concerned and their rent decisions will depend, *inter alia*, upon their estimates of expenditure in 1988-89 on loan charges and management and maintenance expenditure. It is not possible to predict authorities' individual decisions at this stage. In national terms, my right hon. and learned Friend estimates that, if authorities increase their 1987-88 levels of expenditure on management and maintenance by 10 per cent. in 1988-89, average rents in Scotland will rise by approximately £1·65 per house, per week; alternatively, if they increase this expenditure by the level of inflation average rents will rise by approximately £1·20 per house, per week.

Provisional Statutory RFC's 1988-89

Area	*£ million*
Scotland	20·791
Berwickshire	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	0
Roxburgh	0·068
Tweeddale	0
Clackmannan	0·105
Falkirk	0·364
Stirling	0·144
Annandale and Eskdale	0·059
Nithsdale	0·091
Stewartry	0·028
Wigtown	0
Dunfermline	0·237
Kirkcaldy	0·279
North East Fife	0
Aberdeen	0·454
Banff and Buchan	0·111
Gordon	0·066
Kincardine and Deeside	0·043
Moray	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	0·013
Caithness	0·046
Inverness	0·094
Lochaber	0·036
Nairn	0·013
Ross and Cromarty	0·074
Skye and Lochalsh	0·010
Sutherland	0·021
East Lothian	0·174
Edinburgh	0·601
Midlothian	0·134
West Lothian	0·248
Argyll and Bute	0·088
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·022
Clydebank	0·136
Clydesdale	0·114
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·090
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0·116
Cunninghame	0·267
Dumbarton	0·175
East Kilbride	0·016
Eastwood	0·022
Glasgow	12·894
Hamilton	0·265
Inverclyde	0·221
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0·199
Kyle and Carrick	0·197
Monklands	0·335
Motherwell	0·463
Renfrew	0·442
Strathkelvin	0·212
Angus	0
Dundee	0·465
Perth and Kinross	0
Orkney Isles	0·018
Shetland Isles	0·491
Western Isles	0·030

Domiciliary Consultations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the last available year *(a)* the total cost of domiciliary consultations in the National Health Service and *(b)* the number of each specialty, with cost.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* Fees amounting to £1·392 million were paid in respect of such consultations in 1986-87. Other costs such

as travel are not separately identifiable. I regret that information on the number of such consultations and the costs for each specialty is not available.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheep have been monitored for radioactivity in each month since 1 September 1986 in each region in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The information is as follows:

Number of sheep monitored between 1 September 1986 and 31 October 1987

1986

	September		*October*		*November*		*December*	
	SM[1]	*LM*[2]	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*
Borders	1	—	7	—	1	—	6	—
Central	1	—	11	—	2	—	5	—
Dumfries and Galloway	1	279	8	104	3	20	3	17
Fife	2	—	8	—	1	—	7	—
Grampian	1	—	7	—	3	—	4	—
Highlands	—	—	10	36	3	—	4	—
Lothian	1	—	4	—	1	—	4	—
Orkney	2	—	7	—	3	—	5	—
Shetland	5	—	7	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	3	44	11	—	2	—	6	—
Tayside	5	—	10	—	2	—	4	—
Western Isles	—	—	11	—	2	—	5	—
Scotland monthly total	22	323	101	140	23	20	53	17

[1] SM Slaughterhouse Monitoring.
[2] LM Live Monitoring.

1987—January to May

	January		*February*		*March*		*April*		*May*	
	[1]*SM*	[2]*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*
Borders	4	[3]461	8	[3]112	6	—	1	—	3	40
Central	3	—	4	—	5	—	2	—	2	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	[3]513 14	2	[3]395	2	—	—	—	10	240
Fife	5	—	3	—	4	—	5	—	2	—
Grampian	4	—	4	—	4	—	5	—	1	—
Highland	4	—	4	—	4	—	5	—	2	—
Lothian	1	—	2	—	2	—	1	—	—	—
Orkney Shetland	4	—	4	—	3	—	5	—	3	—
Strathclyde	3	[3]281	4	[3]130	4	—	5	—	1	—
Tayside	4	—	4	—	4	—	1	—	2	—
Western Isles	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Scotland monthly total	35	1,269	39	637	38	—	30	—	27	280

[1]SM Slaughterhouse Monitoring.
[2]LM Live Monitoring.
[3] Marked sheep.

1987—June to October

	June		*July*		*August*		*September*		*October*	
	[1] *SM*	[2]*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*	*SM*	*LM*
Borders	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	1	—
Central	—	80	2	230	3	[4]2,034 160	2	[4]1,538 150	—	[4]759 [3]115
Dumfries and Galloway	—	809	2	[4]138 170	—	[4]612 [3]44 150	5	[4]1,747 [3]180 146	—	[4]328 [3]939 153
Fife	—	40	—	—	1	—	4	—	—	—
Grampian	—	100	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—
Highland	—	330	1	—	3	—	1	—	1	—
Lothian	—	40	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—
Orkney Shetland	—	80	—	—	2 2	— —	3 4	— —	—	—
Strathclyde	—	547	—	801	2	[4]1,688 270	4	[4]4,967 [3]474 35	35	[4]1,023 [3]936 337

	June		July		August		September		October	
	[1] SM	[2]LM	SM	LM	SM	LM	SM	LM	SM	LM
Tayside	—	65	—	49	3	—	2	—	—	[3]330
Western Isles	—	110	—	10	2	—	2	—	1	—
Scotland monthly total	—	2,201	6	1,398	24	4,958	30	9,232	5	4,920

[1] SM Slaughterhouse Monitoring.
[2] LM Live Monitoring.
[3] Marked sheep.
[4]Sheep monitored on restricted farms in conjunction with the mark and release scheme.

Scotland—Total

	[1]SM	[2]LM
Borders	42	613
Central	42	5,061
Dumfries and Galloway	36	6,998
Fife	42	40
Grampian	36	100
Highland	42	366
Lothian	19	40
Orkney, Shetland	59	80
Strathclyde	47	11,533
Tayside	41	444
Western Isles	27	120
Scotland monthly total	433	25,395

[1] SM = Slaughterhouse monitoring.
[2] LM = Live monitoring.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dairy Farmers

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers have made use of *(a)* the United Kingdom national and *(b)* the Community milk producers outgoing schemes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A total of 2,267 milk producers have taken advantage of various nationally-funded outgoers schemes, two of which have operated in Northern Ireland only and one in Great Britain only. Provisional figures for the European Community scheme, the second stage of which closed at the end of last month, show that 286 producers have taken advantage of this scheme.

Sugar Beet

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to cut back the level of EEC sugar beet production; and if he will report on moves to negotiate a new international sugar agreement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have consistently supported a policy of price restraint for sugar with full producer financial responsibility for the costs of surplus disposal. The United Nations sugar conference in September 1987 negotiated a new administrative international sugar agreement, one of the objectives of which is to provide a framework for the possible future negotiation of an agreement with economic provisions. The Community has also recently tabled proposals in the GATT Uruguay round for urgent measures to improve the world sugar market.

Food Documents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for all district councils in England and Wales the total allocated number of packets of *(a)* standard food ration documents, *(b)* temporary food ration documents and *(c)* registration documents.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Standard food ration and registration documents are held, and have been held since the 1970s, by my Department for issue to district councils in England and Wales on the basis of one per head of their population, plus a small additional percentage for contingencies. Temporary food ration documents have been allocated sufficient to cover 5 per cent. of the population. Allocations will be reviewed from time to time and varied as necessary.

Sheepmeat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in negotiating the reform of the sheepmeat regime, he will make it his policy to ensure that it is reformed in ways which will maintain the incomes of farmers in the less favoured areas and at the same time reduce the problem of over-grazing.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the review of the EC sheepmeat regime, we intend to ensure that our sheep producers—including those in the LFAs—can continue to capitalise on their natural advantages under a fair and equitable regime. In our consultations with the interests involved, we are also considering views on the matter of over-grazing.

Mark and Release Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many blue-marked sheep in England were monitored under the mark and release scheme of January to March 1987 and found to be suitable for release into the food chain;

(2) how many sheep and lambs destined for further fattening were marked with blue paint by or on behalf of his Department in England in 1986 and until the formal mark and release monitoring scheme was introduced in January 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Just under 5,000 sheep were marked with blue paint on leaving the Cumbria designated area on or before 21 December 1986, after which date the colour used for marking purposes was changed from blue to apricot. The blue mark identified such sheep as ineligible for slaughter. It is not possible to say how many of those so marked would have been destined for further fattening.

The agreement whereby the owners of the blue marked sheep could apply to have them monitored/remonitored

for radioactivity was introduced on 18 December 1986. Between 18 December 1986 and 27 February 1987 on which date all remaining blue marked sheep were released from slaughter restrictions, almost 14,000 blue marked sheep were monitored. All but eight were found to be suitable for immediate release to the food chain and even those eight were found to be suitable on subsequent monitoring. The sheep monitored under this arrangement will have included a number of animals marked blue on leaving the Scottish and Welsh designated areas.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep have been monitored for radioactivity in each month since 1 September 1986, in each county in England.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Sheep monitored in England: 1 September 1986 to 31 October 1987

1986

County[1]	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	—	—	—	—
Cumbria[2]	5,237	14,240	7,440	2,188
Derbyshire	—	—	—	36
Devon	—	—	—	530
Durham	—	—	—	—
Essex	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	—	—	—	—
Hereford/Worcestershire	—	—	—	—
Humberside (North)	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—
Lancashire	—	—	—	379
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	41
Norfolk	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	—	—	—	78
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	1
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	—
Shropshire	—	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire (North)	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire (West)	—	—	—	—
Total	5,237	14,240	7,440	3,253

[1] No sheep have been monitored in counties not included in the list.

[2] Two survey exercises were carried out inside or close to the restricted area in Cumbria: in April/May 1987, 2023 sheep were monitored, in July/August 1987, 960 sheep were monitored. These figures are not included in the monthly table, but should be added to the table.

1987

County[1]	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*[3]
Bucks	847	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	843	566	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	142	119	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cumbria[2]	2,994	2,262	2,101	1,830	2,676	2,320	993	2,795	16,024	25,907
Derby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Devon	384	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	189	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Essex	102	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	103	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Here/Worcs	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside (N)	245	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	—	92	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—	—	216	—	—	—	—
Lancs	801	459	—	—	—	—	—	—	104	—
Lincoln	—	32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	79	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northants	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
Northumberland	966	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Notts	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxford	—	112	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shropshire	1,309	787	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somerset	299	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yorks (North)	576	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yorks (West)	1,427	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	11,049	4,797	2,101	1,830	2,676	2,536	993	2,795	16,128	25,914

[1] No sheep have been monitored in counties not included in the list.
[2] Two survey exercises were carried out inside or close to the restricted area in Cumbria: in April/May 1987, 2,023 sheep were monitored, in July/August 1987, 960 sheep were monitored. These figures are not included in the monthly table, but should be added to the total.
[3] Figures for Cumbria incomplete.

England—Total

County[1]	*Total*
Bucks	847
Cheshire	1,409
Cleveland	261
Cumbria[2]	89,007
Derby	36
Devon	914
Durham	189
Essex	102
Hampshire	103
Here/Worcs	11
Humberside (N)	245
Isle of Wight	92
Kent	216
Lancs	1,743
Lincoln	73
Norfolk	79
Northants	7
Northumberland	1,044
Notts	1
Oxford	112
Shropshire	2,096
Somerset	299
Yorks (North)	676
Yorks (West)	1,427
	100,989

[1] No sheep have been monitored in counties not included in the list.
[2] Two survey exercises were carried out inside or close to the restricted area in Cumbria: in April/May 1987, 2,023 sheep were monitored, in July/August 1987, 960 sheep were monitored. These figures are not included in the monthly table, but should be added to the total.

Radiation Levels

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library monitoring details relating to radiation levels in England and Wales since December 1986 in the same form as in his publication "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals and Agricultural Products".

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* I shall publish the collated results for 1987 in the same format as that for 1986 and place them in the Library of the House early in the new year. I have already from time to time this year published some of this monitoring data which have also been placed in the Library of the House.

Pesticides

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many health inspectors are currently employed in his Department to check on the safety of pesticides; and how many Government inspectors were employed in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

On 1 October 1987 the Health and Safety Executive employed 142 agricultural inspectors and 528 factory inspectors in the field. Their duties include responsibility for pesticide safety. The total number of inspectors in the field in each of the last 10 years is as follows:

1 April figures	*Agricultural inspectors*	*Factory inspectors*
1977	178	602
1978	175	619
1979	179	656
1980	177	664
1981	166	639
1982	156	595
1983	149	572
1984	144	549
1985	150	569
1986	150	[1]540
1987	151	[1]538

[1] Before April 1986 some inspectors now classed as specialists were categorised as general inspectors.

The additional pesticides work now falling to HSE is being accommodated by a rearrangement of priorities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Exporters (Assistance)

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what credit financing assistance is available to British exporters of consumable commodities; and what information he has as to what assistance is available to comparable United States exporters.

Mr. Alan Clark: The normal credit insurance facilities of the Export Credit Guarantee Department are available in respect of consumable commodities. Such cover may be used as collateral for export finance in the commercial market. The terms on which such goods are sold do not normally exceed six months but where there is evidence of official support for more favourable terms, the Department is prepared to consider matching such terms. The United States institutions provide broadly the same type of credit insurance support. In addition, the United States Government, through its Commodity Credit Corporation, makes substantial aid available for the purchase by developing countries of certain commodities, notably agricultural products, on highly concessional terms.

Investor Protection

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the implications for investor protection of the standards of accessibility by investors to brokers, particularly during the recent pattern of dealings of price movements on the London stock exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The volume of trading on the international stock exchange in recent weeks has been at exceptionally high levels, which suggests that the market remained accessible to investors. Stock exchange statistics indicate that private investors were active participants. I am pleased to note how well the exchange's dealing, settlement and surveillance systems have coped. Allegations of difficulties in effecting deals are being investigated by the stock exchange who so far have found no evidence of abuse.

Tariffs

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of imports into the United Kingdom of (i) finished wood, (ii) leather goods, (iii) footwear, (iv) iron and steel products and (v) copper wire from (*a*) India, (*b*) Pakistan and (*c*) Indonesia for each of the past five years; what tariff or non-tariff restrictions exist on such imports from (1) Commonwealth and (2) non-Commonwealth developing countries; and whether Her Majesty's Government or the European Commission have any proposals to reduce such restrictions.

Mr. Atkins: No distinction is made between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealh countries. No quantitative restrictions apply to the named products from those sources.

Duties are charged under an EC common customs tariff —details can be found in the HM Customs and Excise Tariff (copy available in the Library). Further liberalisation of trade in goods by the 95 contracting parties to GATT, in order to expand world trade, is being addressed in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations now under way.

Details of United Kingdom imports are given in the following tables:

Imports from India, Pakistan and Indonesia—1982 to 1986

£'000

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
India					
Finished wood	10	20	16	30	17
Leather goods	17,146	20,855	30,895	38,233	26,902
Footwear	5,419	4,780	4,825	6,098	4,749
Iron and steel products	443	170	108	83	457
Copper wire	15	—	3	1	—
Pakistan					
Finished wood	—	—	—	—	—
Leather goods	574	1,441	2,531	3,068	3,267
Footwear	2,167	1,291	1,045	1,379	926
Iron and steel products	21	10	1	—	216
Copper wire	—	—	—	0	—
Indonesia					
Finished wood	—	—	5	16	41
Leather goods	20	55	54	14	123
Footwear	1	21	16	765	3,053
Iron and steel products	2	—	—	501	2,026
Copper wire	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

1. 0 = less than £500; — = nil trade.
2. Definitions:—
   Finished wood: Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC R2) sub-groups 248.22, 248.32.
   Leather goods: SITC R2 Division 63 less sub-group 613.0.
   Footwear: SITC R2 Division 85.
   Iron and steel goods: SITC R2 Division 67.
   Copper wire: SITC R2 sub-group 682.21 (part) and 693.12.
3. 1986 figures provisional.
4. Imports valued cif.

Business Improvement Services

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what sums of money his Department contributed towards the business improvement services scheme in each of the last three years.

Mr. Atkins: Payments made by my Department in respect of the business improvement services scheme are as follows:

Financial Year	*Payments £000*
[1]1984-85	31
1985-86	5,643
1986-87	13,270

[1] Part year only.

Textiles

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department will seek the extension of the European regional development fund non-quota textile aid scheme beyond its scheduled expiry date of March 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Under the existing ERDF regulation, the European Commission would propose programmes of aid where problems stemmed from Community policies to reduce excess capacity. Substantial sums have been spent in the European Community under the non-quota scheme and the Commission has no plans to extend this. I do not consider it appropriate to press the Commission to do so.

Exports

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the trend in exports from the United Kingdom in 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Autumn Statement, forecast export volume to increase by 5·5 per cent. in 1987. Non-oil export volume is forecast to increase by 7 per cent.

Inner City Task Forces

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each of the inner city task forces *(a)* their budget for the current year and their projected budgets for the next three years, *(b)* the size of their development fund budget for making grants to new businesses, *(c)* the grants made from each development fund since their creation, *(d)* the number of jobs created through such grants, *(e)* the size of their budget for making grants to voluntary organisations, *(f)* the grants made to voluntary organisations since their creation, *(g)* the number of people employed by voluntary organisations through such grants and *(h)* the amount of private sector money made available through the task force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Task forces are not allocated separate budgets. The total budget for the 16 task forces and the central unit for the current year is £14·3 million. I will announce the budget for the next three years, after the publication of the Government's public expenditure White Paper in the new year.

(b) There is no budget as such. Each task force enters into separate negotiations with banks to establish a development fund, and each fund is differently constituted. They may make loans as well as grants. The size of the task force contribution to their fund in those areas that have established them is as follows:

	£
Chapeltown/Harehills (Leeds)	100,000
Handsworth (Birmingham)	200,000
St. Pauls, Bristol	125,000
Moss Side, Manchester	55,000
North Kensington	50,000
Middlesbrough (North Central)	50,000
North Peckham	100,000
Wolverhampton	65,000

(c) The number of grants made by each task force development fund is as follows:

	Number
Chapeltown/Harehills (Leeds)	29
Handsworth (Birmingham)	55
St. Pauls, Bristol	33
Moss Side, Manchester	4
North Kensington	25
Middlesbrough (North Central)	7
North Peckham	1
Wolverhampton	10

(d) It is not possible to give a precise figure for the number of jobs created through task force development fund grants as we have no means of measuring additionality or the number of jobs created indirectly.

(e) There is no specific budget allocation for grants to voluntary organisations; each project proposal put forward is treated on its merits.

(f) The number of grants to voluntary organisations made by each task force is as follows:

	Number
Chapeltown/Harehills (Leeds)	22
Coventry Foleshill/Hillfields	13
Doncaster	0
Handsworth (Birmingham)	32
Hartlepool	2
Highfields (Leicester)	13
Middlesbrough (North Central)	15
Moss Side, Manchester	13
North Kensington	13
North Peckham	14
Nottingham	1
Preston	0
Rochdale	1
Spitalfields	4
St. Pauls (Bristol)	13
Wolverhampton	5
Inner Cities Unit	9

(g) It is not possible to give a figure for the number of people employed by voluntary organisations as a result of task force grants.

(h) It is not possible to break down the amount of private sector money made available through each task force. We estimate the inner cities unit overall is now striking a 'leverage' ratio of around 1:1·6 public to private sector funding.

Trade Barriers

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for publicising the potential benefits for industry of the removal of all trade barriers within the European Economic Community in 1992.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are determined to ensure that British business is given every opportunity to take advantage of the new opportunities which will come from creating a single Community market. We are launching a sustained campaign to increase awareness of the challenge. In addition to a national conference to be held at Lancaster house on 18 April 1988, we are actively preparing a much wider campaign to reach companies throughout the country.

Regional Aid

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was his Department's total expenditure on regional aid to industry, in each differing category of aid, in England and in each of the standard English regions in each financial year since 1978-79 both at current and outturn prices.

Mr. Atkins: For the period in question, expenditure at current prices by my Department on regional aid to industry, by category of assistance paid by standard economic region was as follows:

£ million

Region	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Regional Development Grants									
East Midlands	2·3	2·4	3·2	7·2	8·8	8·2	3·8	4·4	8·4
North	135·3	122·4	117·5	143·9	127·2	101·3	89·1	67·2	102·1
North West	64·3	58·7	105·7	143·4	97·3	83·0	79·9	62·1	101·2
South West	6·0	5·0	8·5	10·3	11·0	7·8	9·5	8·6	15·3
West Midlands	0·1	—	0·1	—	0·1	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	30·2	21·5	38·7	47·1	36·4	23·5	26·8	24·2	27·1
Total	238·2	210·0	273·7	351·9	280·8	223·8	209·1	166·5	254·1
Regional Selective Assistance Industrial Grants									
East Midlands	0·7	0·9	0·6	1·0	4·2	8·7	6·4	3·9	2·2
North	10·7	11·5	15·6	22·6	21·1	15·4	15·3	16·2	18·9
North West	40·1	23·3	19·3	14·6	18·3	13·6	13·7	12·7	18·7
South West	2·4	2·7	2·5	1·7	2·7	2·0	2·1	2·3	5·2
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·5	9·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	5·2	6·8	6·6	7·1	10·6	8·8	9·7	8·3	10·0
Total	59·1	45·2	44·6	47·0	56·9	48·5	47·2	48·9	64·9
Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme[1]	—	—	—	1·1	3·7	5·2	14·2	11·7	19·3
Business Improvement Services[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·6	13·3
Total Regional Selective Assistance	59·1	45·2	44·6	48·1	60·6	53·7	61·4	66·2	97·5
English Industrial Estates Corporation[1]	24·1	26·4	29·1	25·8	12·4	17·0	9·2	10·9	12·6

[1] Expenditure under the exchange risk guarantee scheme, the business improvement services and by the English Industrial Estates Corporation are not available at the regional level: totals only have therefore been provided.

These data converted into constant (1986-87) prices[2] are as follows:

£ million

Region	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Regional Development Grants									
East Midlands	4·5	4·0	4·5	9·2	10·5	9·4	4·2	4·5	8·4
North	263·2	203·7	165·0	184·0	151·8	115·5	97·4	69·2	102·1
North West	125·1	97·7	148·5	183·4	116·1	94·6	87·3	64·0	101·2
South West	11·7	8·3	11·9	13·2	13·1	8·9	10·4	8·9	15·3
West Midlands	0·2	—	0·1	—	0·1	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	58·8	35·8	54·4	60·2	43·4	26·8	29·3	24·9	27·1
Total	463·5	349·5	384·4	450·0	335·0	255·2	228·6	171·5	254·1
Regional Selective Assistance Industrial Grants									
East Midlands	1·3	1·5	0·8	1·3	5·0	10·0	7·0	4·0	2·2
North	20·8	19·1	21·9	28·9	25·1	17·6	16·8	16·7	18·9
North West	78·1	38·8	27·2	18·7	21·8	15·5	14·9	13·0	18·7
South West	4·7	4·4	3·6	2·2	3·2	2·3	2·3	2·4	5·2
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·6	9·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	10·1	11·2	9·3	9·1	12·6	10·1	10·6	8·6	10·0
Total	115·0	75·0	62·8	60·2	67·7	55·5	51·6	50·3	64·9
Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme[1]	—	—	—	1·4	4·5	6·0	15·5	12·0	19·3
Business Improvement Services[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·8	13·3
Total Regional Selective Assistances	115·0	75·0	62·8	61·6	72·2	61·5	67·1	68·1	97·5
English Industrial Estates Corporation[1]	46·9	43·9	40·9	33·0	14·8	19·4	10·1	11·2	12·6

[1] Expenditure under the exchange risk guarantee scheme, the business improvement services and by the English Industrial Estates Corporation are not available at the regional level: totals only have therefore been provided.

[2] Current price data have been converted to constant (1986-87) prices by using the implied market price gross domestic product deflator (1980 = 100).

Research and Development

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish figures on *(a)* Government and *(b)* private sector spending on research and development as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1980 by sector; and what information he has on comparable figures in other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is given in the table:

Expenditure on research and development as a percentage of GDP

Per cent.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom							
Financed by public sources	..	1·2	..	1·1	..	1·0	..
Other sources	..	1·2	..	1·1	..	1·3	..
Canada							
Financed by public sources	0·6	0·6	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·7	0·7
Other sources	0·5	0·6	0·7	0·6	0·7	0·7	0·7
France							
Financed by public sources	0·9	1·1	1·1	1·2	1·2	1·2	..
Other sources	0·9	0·9	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·1	..
Germany							
Financed by public sources	..	1·0	1·0	1·0	..	1·0	..
Other sources	..	1·5	1·5	1·5	..	1·7	..
Italy							
Financed by public sources	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·6	0·7	..
Other sources	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·6	..
Japan							
Financed by public sources	0·6	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·5	..
Other sources	1·6	1·6	1·7	1·8	1·9	2·1	..
United States							
Financed by public sources	1·2	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·4	1·4
Other sources	1·2	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·4	1·4	1·4

.. Data not available.
"Other sources" include industry (including state-owned industries), the universities and other higher education, and the private non-profit agencies.
Source: OECD.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report commissioned by him on the use of steel-jawed leg-hold traps in the major animal fur-producing countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: When my inquiries are complete, I will place a summary of the results in the Library.

Rover Group

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent consultations or communications he has had with a company or companies interested in acquiring the Rover Group, either in part or whole and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had no consultations or communications with any companies on this subject.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will seek assurances from the Rover Group that adequate time will be set aside for consultation with the trades unions and the work force in advance of any decisions which affect the ownership of the Rover Group, or any of its constituent parts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am satisfied that established company procedures provide scope for Rover Group's employees to be kept properly informed of progress towards privatisation.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy that the Rover Group, or any of its constituent parts, is not sold to foreign-owned or partially foreign-owned companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. In considering any proposal that might be brought forward, I would consider the long-term industrial and commercial development of the Rover Group businesses to be more important than the nationality of possible owners.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it is policy that any future owners of the Rover Group maintain or increase investment levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The consequences for investment would form an important part of our consideration of any future proposals that might be brought forward concerning Rover Group's businesses.

Departmental Expenditure (Wales)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total expenditure of his Department in Wales for the current financial year; and what are the figures for each year since 1979 for which complete information is available.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: From 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1984 regional development grants (RDG) payments to companies in Wales totalled £470 million. Responsibility for administration of the RDG scheme in Wales was transferred to the Welsh Office from my Department in November 1984.

Complete information on other expenditure by my Deparment on a regional basis could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, we can say that under the

selective investment scheme payments to industry in Wales since 1979 have totalled some £18 million to date. Also, under support for innovation under the Science and Technology Act 1965 over £8·2 million has been paid to industry in Wales since 1 April 1982. (Figures for the earlier years are not available).

Intermediate Areas

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will now increase the number of intermediate areas.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: I have no plans at present to review coverage of the assisted areas map.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will receive a delegation from local councillors in Bolsover and adjacent north Derbyshire travel-to-work areas seeking intermediate area status.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: I have aready made clear, in response to representations from Derbyshire county council, that we would be willing to receive a delegation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Nurses (Greater London)

10. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the pay and conditions and the working environment of nurses working in Greater London.

Mr. Newton: The pay of nurses, midwives and health visitors is determined on the advice of the independent Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors. Terms of service are a matter for negotiation on the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council.

Since 1979 nurses in Greater London, along with those in the rest of the country, have benefited from an increase in basic pay of 30 per cent. in real terms and a reduction in the working week from 40 to 37½ hours without loss of pay.

Maternity Pay

15. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received about the implemenation of statutory maternity pay since October 1986.

Mr. Portillo: Since October 1986 some 600 letters have been received about statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance. Of these, about 250 related to the impending introduction of the new arrangements in April 1987; and since that date they have mainly concerned individual cases.

Social Fund (Fuel Debts)

16. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the decision to exclude assistance with fuel debts from the provisions of the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the decision to exclude assistance with fuel debts from the provisions of the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

50. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the decision to exclude assistance with fuel debts from the provisions of the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Assistance with a fuel debt may be given from the social fund as a crisis loan, if there is a risk to the health or safety of the applicant or his family. Supplementary benefit recipients can also take advantage of the fuel direct scheme to pay for gas and electricity supplies.

Child Benefit

17. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be in a position to announce whether child benefit will continue for the remainder of the current Parliament.

20. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be in a position to announce whether child benefit will continue for the remainder of the current Parliament.

31. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be in a position to announce whether child benefit will continue for the remainder of the current Parliament.

Mr. Scott: We have made it clear that child benefit, and social security benefits in general, will be kept under constant review.

Severe Weather Allowances

18. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the severe weather heating allowance for pensioners and other people on low incomes.

Mr. Scott: A number of representations have been received about various aspects of the scheme.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received concerning the severe weather payments scheme.

Mr. Portillo: There have been very few recent representations about the exceptionally cold weather scheme.

Disabled Children

19. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will transfer responsibility for the provision of speech therapy and physiotherapy for disabled children from local health authorities to local eduction authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. Most physiotherapists have always been NHS employees; speech therapists have been with the NHS for 13 years. We have no plans to change the system.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled children under the age of 16 years in assessment units currently qualify for supplementary benefits.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Sickle Cell Anaemia

21. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the provision of facilities for screening and counselling for sufferers of sickle cell anaemia.

Mrs. Currie: Screening and counselling services are provided by district health authorities which decide the resources to be devoted locally to this inherited blood disorder in the light of local needs and competing priorities. As at August 1987 there were 10 National Health Service sickle cell counselling centres in England.

District Health Authorities

22. **Mr. Hinchcliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that under the present arrangements for the membership of district health authorities the interests of patients are properly represented.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. District health authorities are composed of people drawn from the local community they serve and from a range of relevant backgrounds. In addition, community health councils, which represent the interests of the public locally, may send observers to health authority meetings and are consulted by health authorities on proposed major services changes.

59. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the amount of finance available to district health authorities for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

86. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the amount of finance available to district health authorities for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

108. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the amount of finance available to district health authorities for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. Health authorities received cash increases averaging 5·7 per cent. at the beginning of the year. Additional funds were subsequently provided to help meet the cost of review body awards. Three of the Thames regions have received additional funds in recognition of the exceptional extra demands they face in providing services for people with AIDS. As a result, the total increase in provision now stands at 8·4 per cent. This is equivalent to growth in real terms of 3·7 per cent.

117. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to ensure that the redistribution of funds by regional health authorities to district authorities has been done in a fair and equitable way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 16 November at column *438*.

Mentally Ill Persons (Halifax)

23. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take on the 1986 Health Advisory Service report on services for mentally ill people in Halifax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is not for Ministers to initiate action on such reports. Responsibility for deciding on the action to be taken in the light of advice given in health advisory service reports rests with the individual health and local authorities concerned. The hon. Member may wish to contact the relevant health and local authorities direct for any further information she may require.

AIDS

24. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra help is being provided in the current year to those regions hardest hit by AIDS.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) on 23 October at column *906*.

Waiting Lists

25. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has had with his Health Service managers concerning reductions in waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: The reduction of waiting lists and particularly waiting times figure regularly as an item for discussion in meetings between Ministers and officials and the chairmen and general managers of regional health authorities.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the reduction in the waiting lists in the Barnet health authority.

Mr. Newton: In the six months to 31 March 1987 the total number of cases on the in-patient waiting list in the Barnet district health authority fell by 514 (12·7 per cent.), from 4,059 to 3,545. Over the same period the number of urgent cases waiting over one month fell by 78 (49·4 per cent.) from 158 to 80. The number of non-urgent cases waiting over one year fell by 273 (32·5 per cent.) from 840 (20·7 per cent. of the total list) to 567 (16·0 per cent. of the total list).

Community Care Services

26. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review the current level of funding of community care services; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to speed up the implementation of community care policies with appropriate resources.

Mr. Newton: Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to review the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy. We shall give very careful consideration to his conclusions, which we expect to receive early next year.

85. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make extra provision available for

local authorities to provide additional and continuing care in the community for elderly and mentally handicapped people; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We provided an extra 1 per cent. worth about £27 million, for improvements in community care in the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88. Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to review the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy and to advise on the options that would improve the use of these funds as a contribution to more effective community care. I understand Sir Roy intends to present his recommendations to my right hon. Friend early in the new year.

95. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to review the arrangements for oversight of local authority provision of services for community care.

Mrs. Currie: We have no present plans to review the arrangements. The provision of social work services in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the reason for the requirement in the social fund regulations for applicants for a community care grant to apply at the office for the area to which they have moved, rather than the area in which they previously lived.

Mr. Scott: Applications for community grants for the cost of removals and/or fares only will normally be the responsibility of the office which covers the area from which the applicant is moving. However, where the applicant is being resettled for institutional or residential care and has applied for other items, the responsibility will lie with the receiving office. This is to facilitate effective liaison with any local agencies involved with the applicant so that the social fund community care grant may complement any other provision that may be made.

Electricity Prices

27. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department will increase the allocation to regional health authorities to compensate for the projected increase in electricity prices.

60. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to provide extra funds for local health authorities to enable them to meet the extra cost of increased electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

71. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to provide extra funds for local health authorities to enable them to meet the extra cost of increased electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

97. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to provide extra funds for local health authorities to enable them to meet the extra cost of increased electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. Health authorities are required to meet all price increases from within the resources available to them.

46. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the impact of an increase in electricity prices on the health of *(a)* young and *(b)* old people.

Mr. Portillo: We have received very few representations about this.

Operating Department Assistants

28. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate his Department has made of the number of operating department assistants employed by the National Health Service from private agencies.

Mr. Newton: Information on the numbers of operating department assistants supplied to the National Health Service by outside agencies is not collected centrally.

Professional and Medical Negligence

30. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider alternative methods of meeting the cost to health authorities of awards for civil damages arising from claims for professional and medical negligence.

Mrs. Currie: Compensation paid under legal liability is met by individual health authorities from their cash limits. In 1986-87 the total of such payments, not all of which related to accidents suffered by patients, amounted to £9·3 million. In addition, hospital doctors pay subscriptions to defence societies which are taken into account by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body when they review their salaries.

Payments (Computer Equipment)

32. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the performance of the computer equipment handling the changes in social security payments in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: So far as the 1988 benefit uprating changes are concerned, the existing equipment will be used, so beneficiaries will almost certainly experience the normal high levels of reliability throughout the changeover.

The microcomputer systems in use in the Department's local offices are being upgraded to handle assessments of the new income support and book-keeping for the social fund—which come into effect from April 1988. There is no reason to suppose that the performance of these systems will fall below the satisfactory level now being achieved. Indeed, the upgraded systems should prove faster and easier to use, as a result of improvements to the software now being finalised.

The family credit system, which also comes into effect from April 1988, represents a much larger gain in efficiency, since it replaces a manual operation with an on-line computer system, aiming to give a response to queries and instructions within, on average, two seconds. The mainframes are consistently providing even higher levels of serviceability than those specified in the contract with ICL, the suppliers.

We place the greatest possible importance on serviceability and the meeting of performance criteria, and ensure that these are achieved both by contractual means and by rigorous quality control. This involves a

continuous programme of mainframe quality assurance, which all equipment must pass before being brought into use.

Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa

33. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to make facilities available for the treatment of dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 20 July at column *454*.

Disabled Claimants

34. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled claimants will receive a lower entitlement under income support than they currently receive.

90. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled claimants will receive a lower entitlement under income support.

116. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled claimants will receive a lower entitlement under income support.

Mr. Scott: None. Under our proposals for transitional protection, claimants whose benefit entitlement on the introduction of the income support scheme would be less than their existing benefit entitlement will have their benefit level maintained.

Merit Awards

35. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid in merit awards to hospital consultants and dentists in the last financial year.

Mr. Newton: The actual amounts paid out in distinction awards are not collected centrally since award holders are paid pro rata to their sessional commitments in the National Health Service. The value of awards recommended by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body for Great Britain was £56·8 million for the year ended 31 March 1987, of which is estimated that some £47 million was paid. These figures include awards made to community physicians as well as those to consultants.

Royal Free Hospital

37. **Mrs. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will direct the Hampstead district health authority and North-East Thames regional health authority not to close more hospital beds at the royal free hospital over the next three years.

Mrs. Currie: No. Health authorities should be free to manage their facilities so as to provide the most effective service to their local populations. Ministerial directions would remove that freedom and could lead to an inefficient use of beds.

Family Credit Scheme

39. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra families will benefit from the replacement of family income supplement by the new family credit scheme.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that around 270,000 more families will receive family credit than are receiving family income supplement.

Housing Benefit

40. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants of housing benefit will receive lower benefit in April 1988.

112. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants of housing benefit will receive lower benefit in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) today.

Benefits

41. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many different benefits are included in the existing social security system.

Mr. Portillo: The exact number depends on somewhat arbitrary assumptions about what is or is not a separate benefit where individual payments are closely related (for example, constant attendance allowance can be paid to people in receipt of industrial injuries disablement benefit or war disablement pension).

The leaflet "Which Benefit" (FB2) published by the Department—a copy of which is held in the Library—lists 34 different benefits.

80. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he proposes to take, in fixing benefit rates, of the increase in electricity charges to be introduced in 1988.

Mr. Scott: The uprating of social security benefits which will take place in April 1988 takes account of price changes, including those in fuel costs, between September 1986 and September 1987. The uprating in April 1989 will have regard to price increases in the 12-month period from September 1987 and will therefore take account of any increase in electricity charges in April 1988.

Speech Therapists (Pay)

43. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the state of negotiations on speech therapists' pay.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for the Whitley council. I understand that the staff side representing speech therapists is now consulting its members about a pay and regrading offer made on 3 November.

Income Support

44. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is reviewing income support rates to take account of the recently announced increase in electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

48. **Mr. Blair:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is reviewing income support rates to take account of the recently announced increase in electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

92. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is reviewing income support rates to take account of the recently announced increase in electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No; the income support rates have been set taking into account current levels of supplementary benefit, evidence as to the relative circumstances of particular groups, available resources and the commitment to compensate claimants for the average value of the 20 per cent. rates contribution that householders will have to meet. In future they will be set by reference to movements in the appropriate price index over the 12 months preceding their announcement. Electricity prices form a component of that index, so any increase in these prices will in due course be reflected in benefit rates.

RAWP Formula

45. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the operation of the resource allocation working party formula.

Mr. Newton: The Department regularly receives inquiries about the operation of the national resource allocation working party formula.

68. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to make changes to the resource allocation working party formula for allocating funds to regional health authorities and to the methods by which regional health authorities allocate moneys to district health authorities.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to review the formula for allocation of funds to National Health Service regions to incorporate particular policies such as community care.

Mr. Newton: The National Health Service management board is currently undertaking a review of the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula. The programme of analysis and research recommended in the initital report on the review in December 1986 is due for completion by around the end of the year, and a report will follow. The implications of the increasing level of community care were among the issues identified for consideration in the review work programme.

There are established arrangements for monitoring regions' distribution of resources to their districts, through regional long-term strategic plans and annual short-term programmes. Resource distribution may also be discussed in regions' annual accountability reviews with Ministers and the NHS management board.

Hospitals (Ministerial Visits)

47. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals in Birmingham have received official visits from Ministers since 11 June.

Mrs. Currie: None. Several invitations have been accepted and it is planned to arrange visits in the new year.

Census

49. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will include a question on hours spent carrying out unpaid voluntary work on the official census.

Mrs. Currie: No decisions have yet been taken on the content of the 1991 census. Consultations are in hand and proposals will be published as a White Paper next year. The consultation process is described in Census Newsletter No. 2, a copy of which is in the Library.

Republic of Ireland Nationals

51. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures available for the cost to the United Kingdom of social security payments for nationals of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Portillo: No figures are available for the cost of social security benefit payments to Irish citizens living in the United Kingdom. Payments of social security benefits to nationals of the Republic of Ireland are not recorded separately and no figures are available for the cost.

Benefit Office, Hackney

52. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to provide the staffing and resources to bring the service at the benefit office in Arcola street, Hackney, up to average levels; and if he will visit the office to see the conditions which staff and claimants experience.

Mr. Portillo: Staffing levels in social security local offices are determined by an agreed complementing system which is designed to match staffing with work loads. The staffing allocation for Stoke Newington office, at Arcola street, Hackney, has increased significantly over the past two years, as follows:

	Number
1985-86	117·0
1986-87	135·0
1987-88	141·5

As at 1 November there were 147 trained staff in post and seven staff under training. There is currently an overcrowding problem but this will be addressed in planning the implementation of the forthcoming computerisation of the assessment and payment of benefits.

Increases in trained staff and a strengthened management team have contributed to a marked improvement in levels of service at the office in recent months. Levels of service are generally satisfactory and stand comparison now with those of other London offices.

£50,000 was spent in March 1986 on improving the facilities for supplementary benefit callers. Further improvements to the caller areas, for which a total of £24,000 has been allocated, are currently being planned and should be completed by April 1988.

My noble Friend, the Earl of Arran, hopes to visit the office shortly.

South-East Thames Region

53. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in the cost improvement programme in the South-East Thames region.

Mrs. Currie: South-East Thames regional health authority and its constituent districts have made cost improvement savings worth nearly £41 million in the last three financial years and plan savings worth over £17 million in the current financial year. These savings are retained within the region and are used for patient care.

Orthopaedic Surgery

54. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will direct the North-East Thames regional health authority and Hampstead district health authority to keep all operating theatres working throughout the Christmas period to reduce the waiting list for hip operations and other orthopaedic surgery.

Mr. Newton: I do not think this would be appropriate.

London Health Authorities (Expenditure)

55. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific services have been identified by his Department as liable to be cut by London health authorities in order to meet the cash reduction over the next three years.

Mr. Newton: There are no plans for cash reductions. The overall cash increase projected for the next three years is about 15 per cent. Regional health authority allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly.

Infected Blood Products

56. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has met a deputation concerning the 1,200 people with haemophilia and infected with HIV through blood products prescribed by the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

69. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has, in the light of the recent meeting between Ministers and the Haemophilia Society, to help HIV positive haemophiliacs with the extra costs of maintaining their health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my statement to the House on Monday 16 November at column 773 in which I announced a grant of £10 million to the Haemophilia Society.

Opren

57. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning compensation in those cases where Opren has been prescribed under the National Health Service and the patient has died.

Mr. Newton: As a result of current proceedings before the High Court the Department has received a number of statements where it is alleged that death was attributable to Opren and we have answered a number of parliamentary questions on this specific subject.

Primary Health Care (White Paper)

58. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the White Paper on primary health care.

72. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish his White Paper on primary health care.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement shortly.

East Yorkshire Health Authority (Portering Services)

61. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings East Yorkshire health authority expects to make by contracting out its portering services.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of East Yorkshire health authority for the information he seeks.

Invalid Care Allowance

62. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken to process claims for invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: The average time taken to decide invalid care allowance claims is currently about 12 weeks.

Psychiatric Hospitals

63. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many psychiatric hospitals he expects to be closed in the next four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may, however, wish to know that from details obtained earlier this year on the 100 or so large mental illness hospitals in England (that is, those which had over 200 beds in 1975), there were plans for the closure of 31 by about 1995, subject to the results of public consultation. We have made clear that none of the hospitals will be closed until a range of appropriate alternative accommodation and services is in place, and planned closure dates must be subject to this proviso.

The objective of policy is the development of high quality local mental illness services covering short-stay and long-stay in-patient care and a comprehensive range of community facilities; the reduction in size of some traditional hospitals and the closure of others will be a consequence of this development.

Patients (Treatment)

65. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patient cases were treated in England in 1986 compared with 1978.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table. Further information about National Health Service hospital activity statistics for England, for the period 1974 to 1986 is contained in statistical bulletin 5/87, a copy of which is in the Library.

Patients treated in NHS hospitals, England, 1978 and 1986

	1978	*1986*
In-patient cases	5,370,319	6,413,789
Day cases	562,168	1,050,158
New out-patients	7,711,912	8,767,788
Total out-patient attendances	33,950,339	37,727,608

100. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patient cases were treated in hospitals in the Trent region in 1986 compared with 1978.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Patients treated in NHS hospitals in Trent, 1978 and 1986

	1978	1986
In-patient cases	461,229	592,398
Day cases	42,083	95,092
New out-patients	637,427	779,739
Total out-patient attendances	2,798,506	3,442,368

Hospital Consultants

66. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra consultant posts the Government are funding in the west midlands following the discussion on the consultation document "Hospital Medical Staffing: Achieving a Balance."

Mr. Newton: To help initiate the programme for structural change in hospital medical staffing set out in "Achieving a Balance: Plan for Action", details of which were announced on 27 October in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) at column *258*, central funding is being made available for a limited period for an additional 100 consultant posts over two years. Of the 45 posts on offer in 1987-88, five have been allocated to West Midlands regional health authority. Bids are currently being considered for the 55 posts available for 1988-89. These posts will be additional to authorities' existing plans for consultant posts. In general it is for health authorities to determine the staff they need to fulfil their service plans, within available resources and broad national guidelines.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

67. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We meet chairmen of all regional health authorities on a regular basis to discuss a wide variety of topics.

Family Needs

70. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra recognition is given in the social security reforms to the needs of families.

Mr. Scott: The social security reforms which take effect from April 1988 will focus help more effectively on people in the greatest need. Lower paid working families with children will receive more help through the introduction of family credit which we expect to be received by over twice the number presently receiving family income supplement. Non-working families with children, as well as lone parents, disabled people and pensioners will get specific additional help through the premiums in the new income support scheme.

Laundry Services

73. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what contribution to patient care the competitive tendering process is providing in the field of hospital laundry services.

Mr. Newton: All measures which improve cost-effectiveness in the National Health Service, such as competitive tendering, are intended to release resources to improve the service as a whole. As at 30 September 1987, the competitive tendering process in laundry services had generated estimated annual savings of over £8 million in England.

Community Nurseries

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish his report on the under-fives initiative on community nurseries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The under-fives initiative was monitored and evaluated by Willem van der Eyken, senior research fellow, Institute of Child Health, University of Bristol, and we expect to receive his final report shortly. When we have studied it we will make an announcement about its publication and dissemination.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures are included in the social security reforms to ease the effects of the poverty and unemployment traps.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 30 June at column *76*.

Social Fund (Loans)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had in relation to loans from the proposed social fund in place of single payments.

Mr. Portillo: We received 108 representations from interested organisations and individuals on the draft social fund manual. The majority of these representations contained a variety of comments about the replacement of supplementary benefit single payments by discretionary grants and loans.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from parents seeking facilities to apply to the social fund for loans to meet charges on pupils for education.

Mr. Portillo: We have received no such representations.

Newham Health Authority

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to resolve the financial difficulties of the Newham health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are responsible for managing their own financial affairs, within the budgets allocated to them. A district health authority would first look to its regional health authority for advice and support on financial matters.

Pensions

78. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what incentives there will be from July 1988 for individuals to build up additional pensions.

79. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what incentives there will be from July 1988 for people to establish personal pension schemes.

Mr. Portillo: From 1 July 1988 it will be possible to contract-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme through a personal pension from a scheme approved by the Occuptional Pensions Board. Personal pensions will attract minimum contributions paid by the Department. These will be made up of a partial rebate of national insurance contributions and, until April 1993, a special incentive payment. In most cases the payments by the Department will include tax relief on the employee's share of the minimum contribution. People taking out a personal pension before 6 April 1989 will be able to backdate membership to 6 April 1987 and claim an extra year's minimum contributions, including the incentive.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the regulations governing the sale of personal pensions, in the light of the Government's decision that they should not be available before 1 July 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I announced on 26 August that the start date for the new personal pension arrangements introduced by the Social Security Act 1986 was to be postponed from 4 January 1988 to 1 July 1988. This decision was taken in the interests of investor protection, following an announcement by the Securities and Investments Board that certain key rules relating to the provision of product information to consumers would not come into force until 1 July 1988.

The postponement necessitates some changes to the regulations governing personal pensions, and amending regulations are being laid before Parliament today. These revoke the Personal Pension Schemes (Appropriate Schemes) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1109), with the result that the Occupational Pensions Board cannot consider applications for personal pension schemes to be appropriate to receive minimum contributions under the Act. Replacement regulations will be made as soon as possible. These will empower the board to accept and consider applications for approval from 1 March 1988 and to issue appropriate scheme certificates from 1 July 1988.

The amending regulations also make a change to the conditions in which the 2 per cent. incentive addition will not be paid to someone taking a personal pension. The original regulations provide that the incentive will not be paid to a person who, having been a member of a contracted-out occupational pension scheme for two years or more, leaves the occupational scheme voluntarily and without changing employment on or after 4 January 1988 in order to take a personal pension. Under the amending regulations the incentive will not be payable to a person who leaves an occupational scheme in these circumstances on or after 6 April 1988.

Surplus Land

81. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the sale of surplus land and property in the National Health Service is expected to realise in 1987-88.

Mrs. Currie: Approximately £200 million.

Hip Replacement

82. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to reduce the length of time patients must wait for hip replacement operations.

Mr. Newton: The median waiting time for elective hip replacement fell from 23 weeks in 1978 to 21 weeks in 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. In 1978, 28,090 such operations were carried out. The figure for 1985 was 37,650. The 100,000 additional patients to be treated with the £25 million waiting list fund for 1987-88 will include several thousand extra hip and knee replacements.

Bexley Hospital

83. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the future of Bexley hospital.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Hospital Building

87. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many major hospital building schemes have been carried through since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Hospitals are normally built in stages comprising a series of building schemes. Information held centrally shows that in England since 1979, 285 hospital building schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed.

Doctors and Dentists

88. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general medical and dental practitioners were working in the East Anglia region in 1986 compared with 1978.

Mrs. Currie: The number of general medical practitioners (unrestricted principals) in the East Anglian region in 1986 was 1,021 compared with 830 in 1978. The corresponding numbers for general dental practitioners were 537 and 411.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent by his Department, in each of the last three years for which figures are available, on post-graduate training for dental practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: Expenditure on courses and associated travel and subsistence expenses for general dental practitioners was £244,000, £243,000 and £254,000 in 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 respectively.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent by his Department, in each of the last three years for which figures are available, on post-graduate training for general medical practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: Expenditure on courses and associated travel and subsistence expenses for general medical practitioners was £1·9 million, £1·8 million and £2·1 million in 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 respectively.

Industrial Injuries

89. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases in 1986 medical appeals tribunals dealing with industrial injuries did not adopt the clinical findings of the adjudicating medical authority.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not held centrally in the form requested and it would involve disproportionate

expense to extract it from case records. Although the clinical findings of adjudicating medical authorities form only a part of the evidence considered by medical appeal tribunals (which will in any event consider the whole case afresh and may have more recent clinical findings available to them), the hon. Member might find the following information helpful:

Appeals heard by medical appeal tribunals on industrial injuries questions in the year ending December 1986

Subject	*Number of appeals heard*	*Decision favourable to claimant*	
		Number	*Per cent.*
Prescribed diseases	530	259	49
Industrial accidents	8,429	3,916	46
Total	8,959	4,175	47

Elderly and Mentally Handicapped People

91. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review his policy of care in the community in respect of the mentally handicapped;: and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The policy is well established. The scope for improving progress in its implementation will be considered in the light of Sir Roy Griffiths' review of the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy and options that would improve the use of these funds as a contribution to more effective community care.

110. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the progress towards joint strategies by health authorities and local authorities for community care services for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped.

Mrs. Currie: Although policy on care in the community is well established, community care services for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people in England are still in the process of development, and more needs to be done to develop joint strategies, and ensure co-ordination between the statutory, voluntary and private sectors which collectively provide the services. Successive Governments have recognised that it will take a good deal of effort and hard work over a long period to produce the kind of service we want. The challenge of providing well co-ordinated community-oriented modern services has been patchily met by some health and local authorities: very good services are being developed elsewhere.

Sir Roy Griffiths is currently reviewing the way public funds are used to support community care policy, including the contribution of joint strategies by health authorities and local authorities. We will decide about action to take once we receive his recommendations.

Diabetics (Blood Testing)

93. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to make diabetic blood testing strips available on National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Newton: Yes. The forthcoming White Paper on primary care will indicate our intention to make blood glucose testing strips, which are at present available on the NHS only through hospitals, available on general practitioner prescription as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made. We hope this will be in the course of next year.

Wider availability of these strips, which enable diabetics to check their position more closely than by the alternative of urine testing, will help more diabetics to monitor and treat their condition in their own homes, thus increasing their independence. It should also, therefore, assist in reducing unnecessary demands on hospital services.

There are some 1 million diabetics in the country, with about 50,000 under medical supervision. Many of these will benefit from the introduction of blood testing strips. There are some uncertainties, for example about the numbers of people who will wish to use the strips, which mean that costs cannot yet be estimated with precision, but they may be of the order of £10 million in a full year.

I am glad that we are now able to propose this further improvement in services for diabetics, following closely on the action we have already taken to make disposable syringes and needles available to them on general practitioner prescription from the beginning of last September.

NHS Funding

94. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to consider alternative methods of National Health Service funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton; Health authorities are already encouraged to dispose of surplus land and buildings, and such sales are currently releasing some £200 million a year for other uses within the National Health Service. As my right hon. Friend has made clear, we shall also be encouraging them to seek ways of generating extra revenue from the non-National Health Service use of appropriate facilities, such as selling refreshments to visitors and advertising.

Cold Weather Payments

98. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how cold weather payments to retirement pensioners will be affected by the proposed changes in the social security system.

Mr. Scott: I announced to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 26 October at column *184* that we intend to provide for a regulated system of help towards the cost of heating in cold weather. This will be paid as a right in a similar way to the arrangements for maternity and funeral payments under the social fund. Precise details will be considered in the light of this winter's experience.

Computerisation

99. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the Government's programme of computerisation of the social security system.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in the computerisation of pensions and benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The operational strategy, the Department's plan for the computerisation of the social security system, continues to meet its targets. Nearly all social security offices have been equipped with microcomputers to assess new claims to benefit and assist with other administrative tasks. The programme to adapt them to deal with income support assessment and book-keeping for the social fund from April 1988 is on schedule.

Unemployment benefit offices have been provided with on-line terminals linking them to the unemployment benefit mainframe computers at Reading and Livingston, enabling staff to call up information held centrally. This has improved the service to the public.

The family credit project—which will make this new benefit the first to have a fully computerised assessment and payment system when it comes into operation in April 1988—remains on target.

The Department is also on schedule to begin, from October 1989, a rolling programme of implementation of three major projects: the local office project — which computerises income support; the retirement pensions project — which will provide on-line assessments and awards of pensions; and the departmental central index —which provides a central record-keeping facility. The implementation programme is scheduled for completion by April 1992.

Further in the future, a project exists to provide on-line assessment and award of unemployment benefit. It is also planned to extend the local office project to cover incapacity benefits.

Leicestershire District Health Authority

101. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the resources to be made available to the Leicestershire district health authority, following the announcements on public expenditure in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Newton: Responsibility for the allocation of resources to districts lies with regional health authorities which decide allocations in the light of their allocations from the Department. I expect the regional allocations for 1988-89 to be announced next month.

Drugs

102. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the increase in real terms in expenditure on National Health Service drugs between 1980-81 and 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: The increase in real terms of expenditure on National Health Service drugs in England between 1980-81 and 1986-87 was 27 per cent.

Voluntary Services

104. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set aside money from the social services budget to finance revenue costs of money raised by voluntary efforts.

Mrs. Currie: Whilst I very much welcome the part played by voluntary bodies in raising funds, I do not believe it would be appropriate to pre-empt local decisions on priorities by health authorities by centrally pre-empting resources in this way. We encourage voluntary and fund-raising groups to discuss their proposed activities with local health authorities before commencement in order to clarify (in the case of equipment or buildings) donated issues such as ownership, insurance, maintenance, replacement and staffing.

Residential Care

105. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the quality of care provided for recipients of supplementary benefit in residential care.

Mr. Portillo: In England and Wales voluntary and privately-run residential care homes with more than three places have to be registered with local social service authorities under the Registered Homes Act 1984. Authorities are obliged to inspect registered homes at least once every 12 months and can do so at any time of the day or night without prior notice. The Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984 specify the services and facilities to be provided including staffing. In addition, a code of practice on residential care, "Home Life", has been drawn up by an independent working party and endorsed by my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The code promotes a framework to help registration authorities in their registration, inspection and support functions, and assists those running homes to clarify their aims and objectives. Much emphasis is placed in the code upon the quality of care received by residents. The registration and inspection system for homes in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Well Woman Centres

106. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will issue guidelines to health authorities encouraging the establishment of well woman centres.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 27 October at columns *246-47*.

Laboratory Staff

107. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what reports he has received on the problem of retaining qualified medical laboratory scientific staff within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) earlier today.

Pensioners

109. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of retirement pensioners in receipt of supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement who receive assistance through housing benefit with charges for heating, hot water, cooking and lighting.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not collected centrally on which such an estimate could be based but evidence from

a study made in 1986 by the social policy research unit at York university suggests that 90,000 claimants receiving supplementary benefit also receive assistance through housing benefit with charges for heating, hot water, cooking and lighting. At May 1986 some 39 per cent. of housing benefit claimants who also received supplementary benefit were retirement pensioners.

St. Thomas' Hospital

111. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the closure of 137 acute beds at St. Thomas' hospital in Lambeth; and whether he will take action to reverse the closures.

Mrs. Currie: About 20 letters have been received concerning the closure of acute beds at St. Thomas' hospital, including those forwarded by hon. Members.

West Lambeth health authority is implementing a package of measures, including some which will generate more income, and many which do not directly affect patient care. Health authorities are required to live within their budgets, and Ministers recognise the difficulty of reconciling what appears to be infinite demand for finite resources. Difficult decisions have to be taken on competing priorities, and we believe these decisions are best taken at local level in the light of local circumstances.

Cancer Screening

113. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what further measures the Government are taking to ensure the establishment of an effective national breast cancer screening service by 1990.

Mrs. Currie: In addition to the extra £6 million made available this year, the Government's cash plans for the next three years include provision for the build-up of the breast cancer screening service and are sufficient to meet its continuing costs.

The financial allocations to regional health authorities for 1988-89 are still being considered, and I shall let my hon. Friend have the details when a decision has been reached.

Appeals Tribunals

114. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has plans to seek to deal with the backlog in the appeals tribunals.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 21 October at columns *797-98*.

Coronary Heart Disease

115. **Mr. Carttiss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths and lost working days are caused by coronary heart disease.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986 there were 148,121 deaths from ischaemic heart disease (coronary heart disease) in England. In the period 1 April 1985 to 5 April 1986 in Great Britain there were 38·8 million days of certified incapacity for sickness and invalidity benefit where the cause of incapacity was ischaemic heart disease. This total excludes periods of incapacity covered by statutory sick pay (in 1985-86 a maximum of eight weeks in the tax year) and all working days lost by certain groups of workers who do not claim these benefits. It includes days of incapacity for which invalidity benefit was claimed by men aged 65 to 69 and women aged 60 to 64.

In 1986, the number of deaths from ischaemic disease in Great Britain was 176,805, and 181,491 throughout the United Kingdom.

Single Payments

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the expenditure for each individual office of his Department on single payments for each of 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is being collated and will be placed in the Library shortly.

Alcohol-related Diseases

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the £2 billion cost to the health budget resulting from alcohol-related diseases.

Mrs. Currie: The £2 billion cost figure is derived from research carried out by the Education and Science Research Council's addiction research centre at the University of Hull and the centre for health economics at the University of York. The research has estimated, on a tentative and conservative basis, that the total resource costs of alcohol misuse in England and Wales amount to £1·846 billion, at 1985 prices. A breakdown of this total is as follows:

The Resource Costs of Alcohol Misuse in England and Wales (1985 prices)

	£ million
1. The Social Cost to Industry	
(a) Sickness absence	723·55
(b) Housework services	48·60
(c) Unemployment	166·74
(d) Premature deaths	653·31
2. Social Costs to the National Health Service	
(a) Psychiatric hospitals, in-patient costs (alcoholic psychosis, alcoholic dependence syndrome, non-dependent use of alcohol)	19·89
(b) Non-psychiatric hospitals, in-patient costs (alcohol psychosis, alcohol dependence syndrome, alcoholic cirrhosis and liver disease)	8·04
(c) Other alcohol-related in-patient costs	82·09
(d) General practice costs	2·1
3. Society's Response to Alcohol-Related Problems	
(a) Expenditure by national alcohol bodies	0·33
(b) Research	0·60
4. Social Cost of Material Damage	
(a) Road traffic accidents (damage)	104·01
5. Social Cost of Criminal Activities	
(a) Police involvement in traffic offences (excluding road traffic accidents)	4·90
(b) Police involvement in road traffic offences (including judiciary and insurance administration)	14·53
(c) Drink related court cases	18·14
Total (excluding unemployment and premature death)	1,026·78
Total (including unemployment and premature death)	1,846·83

Social Fund

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will remove beds and cookers from the requirements covering budgeting loans under the new social fund regulations; and if he will instead provide grants for those items.

Mr. Scott: The social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library, sets out the directions and guidance for social fund officers in relation to budgeting and crisis loans and community care grants; these payments are not governed by regulations. Grants may be considered for beds and cookers where the circumstances of the case satisfy the major community care criteria of helping people in priority groups to move into, or stay in, the community. For others, we believe loans for items such as beds and cookers are right in principle. Loan provide greater equity between income support beneficiaries and others on low incomes, who have to budget for major items of expenditure for themselves; and make better use the resources available.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to monitor the recruitment, training and performance of social fund officers to ensure that the qualifications, salary and job support for these posts is commensurate with the degree of responsibility and stress inherent in the job.

Mr. Scott: Guidance has been issued to local office managers about the selection of social fund staff from existing DHSS officers.

There will be a comprehensive training programme for staff selected to become social fund officers which is designed to enable them to carry out the full range of their duties.

It is intended to monitor the quality of decision making following the introduction of phase 2 of the social fund, but the detailed arrangements for this have yet to be finalised.

NHS (Consultants)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to make consultants' contracts more explicit in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans at present to change consultants' contracts.

Southend General Hospital

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received from the general public about the proposal by the North East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy unit at Southend general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received a total of 29,500 letters from members of the public, together with three petitions about the proposed closure of the radiotherapy department at Southend hospital.

Peto Institute

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he has sent any officials to the Peto institute in Budapest to investigate the help given by conductive education to those suffering from Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, the effects of strokes, and brain damage after road accidents;

(2) from which individuals or organisations external to his Department he has sought advice about the value of conductive education and if he will indicate in each case what information he has as to whether the source of the advice has visited the Peto institute in Budapest;

(3) how many requests he has received for his Department to support the research project into conductive education being carried out by Birmingham university; who, external to his Department, gave advice on the project; and what information he has as to whether they had visited the Peto institute in Budapest;

(4) how much money has been provided by his Department to support research into conductive education as practised by the Peto institute in Budapest, or into its provision.

Mrs. Currie: Since October 1986 we have received approximately 70 letters in support of conductive education, a number of which contained requests for support for the project being undertaken in Birmingham. The Department of Education and Science has agreed to make £326,000 available over a period of five years in support of an evaluation by Birmingham university of the Birmingham project. We sought advice on the evaluation from academic referees, whose help is always given under a guarantee of anonymity. We have also received informed views from a number of people, some of whom have visited the Peto institute, including several hon. Members. Against that background, we have taken the view that no additional purpose would be served at this stage by sending officials to visit the Peto institute in Budapest. However, we shall review the position in light of the survey we are funding jointly with the Department of Education and Science, currently being undertaken by the Spastics Society, of the extent to which some aspects of conductive education are being used in this country.

Road Accidents

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated number of adults in Britain suffering from *(a)* Parkinson's disease, *(b)* multiple sclerosis, *(c)* the effects of strokes and *(d)* brain damage after road accidents.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that no information is available centrally to enable firm estimates to be made. However, the right hon. Member may wish to refer to a recent article by Dr. D. T. Wade and Dr. R. Langton Hewer in "International Rehabilitation Medicine" (1987; volume 8, No. 3 pp 129-137), on the epidemiology of some neurological diseases with special reference to work load in the National Health Service, of which a copy has been placed in the Library. This suggests that it is reasonable to assume a prevalence of 160 per 100,000 population for

Parkinson's disease; 100 per 100,000 population for multiple sclerosis; 600 per 100,000 population for stroke, with 360 per 100,000 being disabled; and 300 per 100,000 population for disabled survivors of head injury (from all causes). The nature and degree of disability involved will of course vary widely.

Retirement Age

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his current estimate of the net cost to public funds of introducing a system of flexible retirement age for men and women alike between the ages of 60 and 65 years on the lines of the earlier Select Committee on Social Services recommendation and of the private Member's Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Eastleigh in 1983.

Mr. Scott: It is extremely difficult to estimate the cost of such a scheme, because the cost depends very much on the extent to which individuals opt for abated pension before age 63, the precise arrangements for abatement and interaction with other benefits. The latest estimate, based on 1985/86 benefit rates, is that the net annual cost to public funds of equalising pension age at 63 would be of the order of £800 million. An interdepartmental group of officials is currently re-examining the economic assumptions on which the estimated costs are based.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam), *Official Report*, 27 October 1987, column 245, Her Majesty's Government began their examination of the social and economic implications of proposals for equalising the age of eligibility between men and women for the basic state retirement pension; when they expect to reach conclusions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Work on reappraising the cost and economic implications of changes in pension age has been proceeding since 1986, together with a general consideration of various options. We expect that conclusions will be reached in 1988.

Disabled People

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to follow up his statement of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *191*, that he would seek a way of targeting more effectively benefit for disabled people after April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in safeguarding the position of severely disabled people who would have been eligible for additional payments under the existing social security legislation but who will not be entitled to such benefits under the new legislation if their first application is made after April 1988.

Mr. Scott: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has undertaken a major survey into the numbers, needs and circumstances of disabled people, the first results of which will be published next year. Furthermore, the arrangments for the community care of severely disabled people and others, are currently under review by Sir Roy Griffiths. I understand that he intends to present his recommendations to the Secretary of State early in the new year. The effect of the income support scheme on the disabled will be considered in the light of these reports.

Agency Staff

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what controls his Department exercises over the fees that hospital authorities may pay to agency nurses; what consideration he is giving to applying similar restrictions in the case of agency doctors; and how soon he expects to reach a decision on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) on 23 November.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses are currently engaged within the National Health Service, who are employed by agencies, or who are otherwise covered by contracts of employment with the service.

Mr. Newton: The number of agency nursing and midwifery staff employed in the National Health Service in England at 30 September 1986 was 5,450 whole-time equivalents. In addition, at the same date, health authorities employed 4,220 WTE bank nursing and midwifery staff on a causal basis.

Christmas Bonus

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give consideration to extending the Christmas bonuses scheme to include lone parents on supplementary benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There are no plans to extend the Christmas bonus to further groups of social security beneficiaries.

Elderly People

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what increase has occurred in the number of people aged 75 years and over in the population of England in the five years up to the last date for which figures are available; and what increase has taken place in the number of places in local authority homes for the elderly in the same period.

Mrs. Currie: As at mid-1986, the latest date for which information is available, the estimated number of people aged 75 and over in England was 3·1 million; the figure for mid-1981 was 2·8 million. As at 31 March 1985, the earliest date for which information is available, there were 102,500 places in local authority homes for the elderly; the figure for 31 March 1986 was 101,500.

Further information on residential accommodation for the elderly and younger disabled is contained in the Department's publications "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People — RA/86/2" and "Residential Accommodation for the Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People Local Authority Supported Residents — RA/86/1" copies of which are in the Library.

Benefits (Leeds)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of outstanding claims for social security benefits in the Leeds, West offices of his Department on the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same month in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Details of the number of claims outstanding at the two offices concerned are shown in the following table.

	25 October 1983	*23 October 1984*	*22 October 1985*	*21 October 1986*	*20 October 1987*
Leeds, North West					
Sickness/Invalidity Benefit	170	187	130	101	161
Severe Disablement Allowance	—	—	—	47	65
Maternity Benefit/Allowance	51	94	64	45	31
Retirement Pension	141	673	468	262	228
Supplementary Benefit Claims	651	743	968	514	695
Leeds West					
Sickness/Invalidity Benefit	90	84	92	82	64
Severe Disablement Allowance	—	—	—	25	45
Maternity Benefit/Allowance	31	40	41	37	15
Retirement Pension	91	205	147	165	127
Supplementary Benefit	198	174	308	241	263

Figures prior to 1983 are no longer available. SDA was introduced from 29 November 1984 but no figures were kept before June 1986 for the number of severe disablement allowance claims outstanding.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals against decisions relating to single payments for people on supplementary benefit are currently being dealt with by the Leeds, West offices of his Department; and how many were made in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: On 20 November 1987 Leeds, West ILO had 14 appeals against decisions on supplementary benefit single payments where the appeal had been forwarded to the local social security appeal tribunal but a submission by the adjudication officer on the appeal had not yet been made. An adjudication officer's submission had been forwarded to the local social security appeal tribunal in respect of a further 191 single payment appeals and these appeals are either awaiting a hearing or notification of the tribunal decision.

I regret that equivalent figures for each year since 1979 are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments for people on supplementary benefit have been made by the Leeds, West offices of his Department in each year since 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo: Two of the Department's local offices serve the Leeds, West area, Leeds North-West and Leeds, West. Information is given for the period from May 1983 to April 1987 in the table. Information for the period 1979 to April 1983 is not available.

Year[1]	*Leeds North West*	*Leeds West*
1983-84	4,251	7,325
1984-85	6,759	8,619
1985-86[2]	10,066	12,420
1986-87[2]	10,919	11,290
1987-88[3]	5,346	3,396

[1] The figures are given for the year May to April.
[2] The figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are provisional and subject to amendment.
[3] The figures for the year 1987-88 are for the period up to 20 October 1987. They are also provisional and subject to amendment.

Computer Network

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of jobs that would be lost throughout his Department if the proposed privatisation of its computer network takes place; and what is his estimate of the costs involved.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 5 November, at column *869*.

Family Planning

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial support is being given by his Department to the Family Planning Association and Brook advisory centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The grants to both organisations are being reviewed for the three years ending 31 March 1990. The Family Planning Association will receive £130,000 per annum from the Department towards its headquarters administrative expenditure and regional activities and financial support will also be provided by the health

departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The DHSS grant for the last three-year period was £115,000 per annum.

In the current financial year an additional grant of £7,960 is being given for a specific FPA initiative in running pilot training courses in five health authorities on the AIDS aspects of the work of family planning staff, and additional sums for AIDS related work will be considered if the FPA bring forward suitable proposals. Financial assistance for the training of FPA and Brook advisory centres staff on AIDS was provided in the last financial year.

For the period 1987-90 Brook will receive £45,000 per annum towards its headquarters administrative costs, including the education and information activities designed to encourage responsible attitude to personal relationships among young people under 25 and the co-ordination of the local Brook centres working directly with young people. The grant for the last three-year period was £35,000 pa. The conditions attaching to these organisations' grants, in relation to expenditure, activities and liaison with Government Departments, will continue to apply.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 25 November 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Small Claims

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Attorney-General if he will announce the result of the consultation process initiated by the consultation paper No. 2, "Small Claims"; and if he will raise the limit of claims to be dealt with by small claims courts from £500 to £1,000.

The Attorney-General: The Civil Justice Review Body is due to report to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor on the review as a whole early in 1988. It would not be appropriate for me to predict now the outcome on a particular matter.

Common Hold

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take following the publication of the Law Commission "Report on Common Hold".

The Attorney-General: The working group report Cm. 179 to which the hon. Member refers was published by the Law Commission as recently as July last. A decision on implementation will be taken when the recommendations have been fully considered.

Nevada Buildings, Lancashire

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Attorney-General if the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Nevada Buildings of Nelson, Lancashire, for allegedly taking money under false pretences in relation to the supply of garden outbuildings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No allegation against that company has been made to the Crown Prosecution Service. The question of its prosecution by the Crown Prosecution Service therefore does not arise.

TRANSPORT

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* the maximum and *(b)* the average retirement age of air traffic controllers in (i) the United States of America, (ii) Canada, (iii) Australia, (iv) New Zealand and (v) each EEC country.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on average retirement ages is not available. The maximum retirement ages where known are as follows:

65—Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, Canada, Eurocontrol.
60—United States, United Kingdom.
55—Belgium, France, Netherlands.
53—Federal Republic of Germany.

Bus Services (Bexley)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representations concerning alterations to bus services within the London borough of Bexley.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received a number of representations on two aspects of London Regional Transport's proposed local route network in Bexley. Decisions on the routeing of bus services are a matter for LRT, within the framework of statutory consultation.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of expenditure in constant value terms in motorway investment and trunk road maintenance for 1979 and now; and what lengths of motorway were in use and being constructed in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

	1979-80 £ million	*1987-88 £ million*
Expenditure on new construction	546	600
Expenditure on capital maintenance (including bridges)	104	230
	miles	*miles*
Length of motorway in use	1,300	1,586
Length of motorway under construction	106	16

Expenditure figures are at constant 1985-86 prices, and are for motorways and all-purpose trunk roads combined.

The lengths of motorway provided are as at 1 April 1979 for 1979-80 and as 1 November 1987 for 1987-88.

Motorways (Safety)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in improving the safety of contra-flow sections on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Contra-flow crossovers have been made longer and smoother so that vehicles can negotiate them more easily and safely. The Department is discussing with the police the use of mandatory speed limits at countraflow sites. We are evaluating the video monitoring of major roadworks to allow earlier detection and warning of breakdowns and accidents. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has recently commissioned a further study of accidents at contraflows.

M6 (Maintenance)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total annual cost for maintenance on the M6 for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures for expenditure on structural and routine maintenance to the M6 are given in the table. They do not include the cost of bridge or lighting maintenance.

	£
1979-80	8,728,420
1980-81	14,850,684
1981-82	22,721,130

	£
1982-83	23,576,263
1983-84	26,594,463
1984-85	30,335,660
1985-86	[1]18,121,164

[1] Estimate.

King's Cross (Fire)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give further details about the arrangements for the formal investigation into the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Channon: Following the appointment of Mr. Desmond Fennell OBE QC to head the formal investigation into the King's Cross fire, I have today appointed Major Anthony G. B. King, inspecting officer of railways from my Department, Dr. Alan F. Roberts, director of the explosion and flame laboratory at the Health and Safety Executive, Sir Peter Darby CBE, lately HM chief inspector of fire services for England and Wales, and Professor Bernard Crossland CBE emeritus professor of mechanical engineering at Queen's university Belfast, as assessors to the formal investigation.

A preliminary meeting of the formal investigation will be held, before Mr. Fennell, at 10.30 am on Wednesday 2 December 1987 in Church house, Great Smith street, London, SW1. Any persons or their representatives who were involved in the fire or who may have relevant information that they wish to put before the investigation are invited to attend. Advertisements are being placed in the press.

Maritime Transport (Italy-Algeria)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of Transport if he will make a statement on the European Community's decision concerning the agreement on maritime transport between Italy and Algeria.

Mr. David Mitchell: An EC Council decision was adopted on 17 September concerning an agreement on maritime transport covering cargo trade between Italy and Algeria. The decision allows Italy to ratify the agreement on the understanding that both countries are clear that the agreement will be implemented in accordance with Community law and that Italy takes steps to ratify the United Nations code of conduct for liner conferences as soon as possible. The decision provides for the Community to review the position within a year.

The agreement had been notified under EC regulation No. 4055/86 agreed in December 1986, applying the principle of freedom to provide shipping services to, from and between member states. This regulation prohibits new bilateral cargo-sharing arrangements between member states and third countries from 1 January 1987 except in exceptional circumstances, where liner shipping would not otherwise have an effective opportunity to ply for trade to and from the third country concerned. Italy reported such circumstances to the Community.

In referring the proposed decision to the Select Committee on European Legislation my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping stated that he proposed that it should be adopted without waiting for the completion of the scrutiny process. I regret that this was necessary because unless it were adopted by 17 September, Italy would be free to ratify the agreement without taking account of the Council's views. This was the first notification of a proposed agreement under the regulation and it was important that the final phase of the Community's shipping policy be seen to be respected.

The Select Committee on European Legislation has now completed its scrutiny and while considering that it raised issues of political importance, and noting the reasons for its adoption before scrutiny, has not recommended it for debate.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total amount of vehicle excise licence duty paid annually by vehicle owners for each year for which figures are available since 1957.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Revenue from Vehicle Excise Duty (net of refunds) for the United Kingdom is as follows:

Year	*£ million (cash)*
1975-76	765
1976-77	814
1977-78	1,045
1978-79	1,086
1979-80	1,162
1980-81	1,360
1981-82	1,618
1982-83	1,840
1983-84	1,997
1984-85	2,264
1985-86	2,426
1986-87	2,520
1987-88	2,574

Comparable figures for periods before 1975-76 are not available.

PRIME MINISTER

Grant-related Expenditure

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to ensure that the setting of grant-related expenditure assessment by the Secretary of State for the Environment, and the setting of expenditure levels by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for fire and civil defence authorities, is co-ordinated, and that both sums have regard to approved establishment levels, including support staff, turn out, special services, pension costs and fire prevention work.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that such co-ordination takes place. Grant-related expenditure assessments are required for the purpose of distributing block grant calculated on principles applicable to all authorities; expenditure levels for the joint fire and civil defence authorities are set as part of the precept limitation process and are intended to reflect the particular circumstances of individual authorities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Governors' Association

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now recognise the Prison Governors' Association.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering the new association's request for recognition, which was received

last month. Consideration of the request will inevitably take some time; there are a number of factors to be examined, and the views of other interested parties must be taken into account.

False Police Identity Cards

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to increase the maximum sentence for possession of a false Ministry of Defence police identity card.

Mr. John Patten: Adequate maximum penalties are already available to the courts.

Bowling Green Hostel, Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of *(a)* violent crimes and *(b)* other crimes per year since 1977 committed by residents of the Bowling Green probation hostel in Carlisle during their time at the hostel.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is as follows:

	Violent crimes	*Other crimes*
1984	Nil	9
1985	2	13
1986	1	11
[1]1987	Nil	10

[1] To 30 June.

Prisons (Security)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being contemplated to reduce the number of prison disturbances and escapes.

Mr. John Patten: All such incidents are the subject of review and debriefing; lessons learnt inform policy, guidance and procedures at all levels. Our main programme for the reduction of overcrowding and the improvement of physical conditions through the prison building and refurbishment schemes, together with new conditions of service and working methods under fresh start, will underpin the more specific measures taken following the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons on the major disturbances in spring 1986.

Michael Ryan

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Thames Valley as to what weapons the late Michael Ryan held illegally.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Advertisements

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to control the publications of advertisements which encourage the commission of criminal offences such as smuggling, the productions of bombs, or the illegal purchase of firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is an offence to solicit or incite another to commit a crime, whether or not the solicitation or incitement has any effect. A person who publishes an advertisement inciting any of the activities mentioned is thus liable to be charged with a criminal offence. We have no plans to introduce any further form of restriction.

Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to calculate expenditure levels for metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities for 1988-89 by reference to original respective redetermination submissions for 1987-88, updated for inflation and other committed expenditure.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the figures for *(a)* expenditure levels and *(b)* grant-related expenditure assessments for each metropolitan fire and civil defence authority; if he will list the factors which account for the difference between the two figures for each such authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest provisional figures for the seven joint fire and civil defence authorities' expenditure levels (ELs) and grant-related expenditure assessments (GREs) for financial year 1988-89, are as follows:—

Fire and civil defence authority	*1988-89 GRE (Provisional) £ million*	*1988-89 EL (Provisional) £ million*
Greater Manchester	38·290	46·799
Merseyside	29·739	31·617
South Yorkshire	17·970	22·314
Tyne and Wear	18·749	22·649
West Midlands	40·534	42·696
West Yorkshire	27·294	36·489
London	142·504	166·775

GRE assessments and expenditure levels have different functions and purposes, and are formulated on different bases. GRE assessments are the method by which block grant is distributed on the basis of principles common to all authorities. Expenditure levels are set as part of the precept limitation process and are intended to reflect the particular circumstances of individual authorities.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the cancellation of 16 November meeting, he or one of the Ministers in his Department will meet a delegation of representatives of the fire services sub-committee of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss fire service funding levels for 1988-89.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are seeking a mutually convenient date on which to hold the postponed meeting, the purpose of which is to discuss expenditure levels and grant related expenditure assessments for the fire and civil defence authorities.

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy towards the purchase of equipment from Electronic Data Systems.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office's procurement policy, which applies to all potential contractors, including Electronic Data Systems, is to seek best value for money for competent suppliers.

SCOTLAND

Road Accident Statistics

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* cases of serious injuries caused by road traffic accidents in each regional authority in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows—

Severity	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Borders					
Fatal	24	22	23	14	11
Serious	298	266	214	260	259
Total	322	288	237	274	270
Central					
Fatal	42	26	27	23	53
Serious	516	424	395	361	417
Total	558	450	422	384	470
Dumfries and Galloway					
Fatal	23	34	26	28	42
Serious	254	238	224	223	274
Total	277	272	250	251	316
Fife					
Fatal	41	30	37	32	29
Serious	479	454	456	419	380
Total	520	484	493	451	409
Grampian					
Fatal	92	72	80	95	59
Serious	779	580	643	690	632
Total	871	652	723	785	691
Highland					
Fatal	52	31	46	39	36
Serious	579	430	443	450	399
Total	631	461	489	489	435
Lothian					
Fatal	89	63	68	72	73
Serious	1,660	1,392	1,366	1,336	1,319
Total	1,749	1,455	1,434	1,408	1,392
Strathclyde					
Fatal	267	268	225	240	226
Serious	3,692	3,071	3,223	3,151	2,907
Total	3,959	3,339	3,448	3,391	3,133
Tayside					
Fatal	62	71	58	51	61
Serious	830	667	697	792	769
Total	892	738	755	843	830
Orkney					
Fatal	2	—	—	3	8
Serious	30	25	18	24	20
Total	32	25	18	27	28
Shetland					
Fatal	2	3	4	2	3
Serious	70	40	25	42	20

Severity	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Total	72	41	29	44	23
Western Isles					
Fatal	5	4	5	3	—
Serious	73	46	23	40	26
Total	78	50	28	43	26

Private Operations

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of private operations for *(a)* the removal of eye cataracts and *(b)* joint replacement within the Grampian health board area in 1986, together with equivalent figures for 1985, 1980, 1975 and 1970.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Schools (Easterhouse)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many teachers of mathematics, sciences, physical education, history and modern languages there are in schools in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow;

(2) how many posts for teachers of mathematics, physical education, modern languages and sciences have been vacant for more than two months in the schools of the Easterhouse area of Glasgow;

(3) how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools there are in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow;

(4) how many children are in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Easterhouse area of Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Easterhouse can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Community Organisations (Easterhouse)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of community organisations from Easterhouse in Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received no requests for such a meeting.

Family Planning Association

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial support is being given by his Department to the Family Planning Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to renew the grant awarded to the Family Planning Association under section 16(B) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 for the three years to 31 March 1990 at a rate of £14,000 per annum. The grant is intended to meet part of the costs of the association's information, education and resource centre in Glasgow.

Still Births

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the expected incidence of still births in Scotland per year; if he has any evidence of any unusual geographical or temporal concentration of still births in any recent year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* There is no figure for the expected number of still births per year. The table following shows still birth rates per 1,000 births in Scotland and health board areas in recent years.

Still birth rates per 1,000 births (live and still) by Health Board Area, Scotland, 1981 to 1986

Health Board Area	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Scotland	6	6	6	6	5	6
Borders	3	5	3	6	3	5
Forth Valley	7	7	7	5	5	4
Dumfries and Galloway	6	3	9	5	7	2
Fife	5	7	5	6	6	6
Grampian	7	6	6	6	5	5
Highland	7	6	6	6	5	4
Lothian	5	6	6	6	5	4
Argyll and Clyde	7	5	6	6	7	6
Ayrshire and Arran	4	6	7	6	4	7
Greater Glasgow	7	6	5	6	7	6
Lanarkshire	7	6	6	6	5	10
Tayside	4	4	4	4	5	6
Orkney	4	8	9	16	13	4
Shetland	3	14	19	9	3	6
Western Isles	15	3	3	9	5	—

I have no evidence of any unusual geographical or temporal concentration of still births.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind *[holding answer 17 November 1987]:* The only residential accommodation provided for Scottish Office Ministers is my official residence at Bute house, Edinburgh which is used primarily for receptions and other formal Government occasions. The running cost figures for Bute house (rent, rates, fuel and maintenance) are as follows:

	£
1979-80	8,000
1980-81	37,000
1981-82	9,000
1982-83	11,000
1983-84	14,000
1984-85	12,000
1985-86	52,000
1986-87	102,000

The figures for 1980-81, 1985-86 and 1986-87 reflect the incidence of major works of maintenance.

Residential accommodation continues to be provided for prison staff on a diminishing scale. The available figures for the net running costs are:

	£
1981-82	184,000
1982-83	258,000
1983-84	215,000
1984-85	137,000
1985-86	199,000
1986-87	94,000

The information in respect of other civil servants is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and on an incomplete basis.

Rural Areas (EC Assistance)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek European regional development fund assistance for rural areas, as proposed in the European Commission's framework proposal on the reform of the Community Structural Fund (Cmnd. (87)376).

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

The Commission's proposal for a framework regulation is currently the subject of detailed examination and debate. Proposals for implementing regulations including that for ERDF have yet to be made, and overall implementation is in any event not proposed before 1989. Until then, the current ERDF regulation remains in force and applications for assistance for rural areas will continue to be submitted within the terms of that regulation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science Graduates

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of science graduates leaving university in 1987 and 1986; and if he will indicate how these figures compare with those for 1987 and 1976.

Mr. Jackson: There was a total of 17,300 first degree science graduates leaving universities in the United Kingdom in 1986, compared with 14,000 in 1976, excluding medicine, engineering and agriculture. In 1986 there were also 8,600 science first degree graduates from polytechnics and colleges in Great Britain. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Scottish Universities

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the funding of Scottish universities since the announcement of the Government's spending plans in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Jackson: None.

Overseas Students

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list, for each year since 1978 the total fees paid to British educational establishments by students from *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* East Africa, *(e)* Hong Kong, *(f)* India, *(g)* New Zealand, *(h)* Pakistan, *(i)* South Africa, *(j)* South America, *(k)* Sri Lanka, *(l)* the United States of America, *(m)* West Africa, *(n)* the West Indies and *(o)* Zimbabwe;

(2) if he will list, for each year since 1978, how many students have attended British educational establishments from *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* East Africa, *(e)* Hong Kong, *(f)* India, *(g)* New Zealand, *(h)* Pakistan, *(i)* South Africa, *(j)* South America, *(k)* Sri Lanka, *(l)* the United States of America, *(m)* West Africa, *(n)* the West Indies and *(o)* Zimbabwe.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the number of students from the specified countries in universities, polytechnics and colleges in the United Kingdom is shown in the table. The recommended overseas fee levels for such students is also shown in the table. Information on the actual fees paid is not collected centrally.

Students from abroad and fee levels in the United Kingdom 1978 to 1985

	Academic Year							
	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
A. Number of Students								
Australia	800	700	500	400	400	400	400	500
Bangladesh	400	400	300	300	200	300	400	400
Canada	1,100	900	700	500	500	700	800	1,000
Hong Kong	5,100	6,300	6,400	5,800	5,700	6,900	6,900	7,000
India	1,200	1,100	800	700	600	800	1,000	1,100
New Zealand	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Pakistan	1,000	900	700	600	500	600	700	900
South Africa	700	600	500	400	300	300	400	400
Sri Lanka	2,100	1,600	1,200	800	600	600	600	700
United States	3,700	3,200	2,500	2,200	2,300	3,100	3,400	4,700
Zimbabwe	1,500	2,200	1,700	900	600	400	300	300
East Africa	2,200	2,200	2,100	1,900	1,500	1,700	1,900	1,900
West Africa	7,600	6,600	6,400	6,300	5,600	4,900	4,200	4,200
West Indies	1,200	1,100	900	700	500	500	700	700
South America	2,200	2,000	1,700	1,100	900	800	800	800
B. Recommended Minimum fees								
Universities[1]								
Arts Courses	—	—	2,000	2,500	2,700	2,900	3,150	3,310
Science Courses	—	—	3,000	3,600	3,600	3,800	4,150	4,350

	Academic Year							
	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Clinical Courses in Medicine and Veterinary	—	—	5,000	6,000	6,600	7,000	7,650	8,050
Postgraduate	[2]925	[2]1,230						
Undergraduate	[2]705	[2]940						
MAINTAINED[3] ASSISTED INSTITUTIONS (England and Wales)								
Advanced Courses	[2]705	[2]940	[4]3,300 [5]2,400	[4]3,672 [5]2,649	3,000	3,180	3,180	3,310
Non-Advanced Courses	[2]390	[2]520	[4]1,890 [5]1,380	[4]2,091 [5]1,479	1,700	1,750	1,750	1,820

[1] Recommended minima made by University Grants Committee.
[2] Subsidised Fees.
[3] Recommended minima made by Council of Local Education Authorities.
[4] Laboratory based.
[5] Classroom based.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he takes to discover the number of surplus places in primary and secondary schools in a local authority which has put up to him a proposal for school reorganisation.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities to provide details where appropriate of the number of surplus places in the schools affected by statutory reorganisation proposals. Where this information is not provided, LEAs are asked to supply it.

University of Wales

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to the income of each of the constituent colleges of the University of Wales from sources other than Government grants during the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has as to the income of each university in England and the University of Wales from sources other than Government grants during the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what information he has as to the proportion of the income of each of the constituent colleges of the University of Wales which came from sources other than Government grant during the last year for which figures are available;

(4) what information he has as to the proportion of the income of each of the English universities and the University of Wales which came from sources other than Government grant during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to tables 3 and 4 in volume 3 of "University Statistics 1985-86", a copy of which is in the Library.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet the officers of the University of Wales to discuss the future of higher education in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Student Grants

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning the levels of grants to students in higher and further education.

Mr. Jackson: Taking into account recent representations to the student support review, as well as other written representations of a general character, the number received over the last six months is about 100. I have also had discussions on student support, at my own instigation, with representations of the National Union of Students, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost of the investment programme for the electricity supply industry to the year 1990; how the programme is made up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The industry's investment programme for the years in question is comprised as follows:

£ million outturn prices

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
CEGB	673·0	780·0	970·0	1,530·0
Area Boards	668·0	752·9	759·4	799·4
Total	1,341·0	1,532·9	1,729·4	2,329·4

The CEGB expenditure on new generation projects includes the costs of completing the existing programme of AGR stations, the costs of Sizewell B, and a provision for the initial costs of new coal and nuclear stations for which approval has not yet been granted.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the electricity supply industry's investment programme is renewal of existing assets and how much is to meet new demand.

Mr. Parkinson: The industry's investment programme represents a comprehensive programme designed to meet new load, to serve existing demand more economically and to replace old plant. Many projects are undertaken for a combination of these reasons. It is not feasible to divide up the expenditure in the way suggested.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the assumption for inflation built into the estimates for the investment programme for the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: The industry has assumed general inflation of 4 per cent. for the year ending 31 March 1989, and 5 per cent. per annum thereafter.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy by how much electricity prices will have increased in the three years to April 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: The last substantive increase in electricity tariffs was in April 1985, when domestic tariffs rose by an average of 4·3 per cent. and industrial tariffs by an average of 4·9 per cent. Tariff increases in April 1986 for domestic consumers were removed, and, in the case of industrial consumers more than offset, by reductions later in the year. There has been no increase in 1987.

The net effect of these changes has been to reduce the average real price by domestic consumers by 6·9 per cent. between April 1985 and October 1987. The corresponding figure for industrial consumers is a reduction of 10·6 per cent. (from Q2 1985 to Q2 1987) Assuming that inflation continues at its current level of around 4 per cent. per annum until the end of the financial year, even after the next electricity tariff increase has taken effect, prices will be no higher in real terms than in April 1985.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to raise at the next Council of European Energy Ministers, the implications for the future of European civil nuclear collaboration of the outcome of the Italian referendum result on nuclear power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the contractual arrangements for United Kingdom participation in the Superphenix project for a fast reactor, presently held by the Central Electricity Generating Board, include any stipulation on the proportional ownership by participating countries of the electricity output from the Superphenix fast breeder reactor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what agreement has been made with other partners in the European fast reactor collaborative programme over the expected payback time in electricity production in proportion to the respective investments made by each country in the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The return on the utilities' investment in future fast reactor plant will be a matter for the utilities.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he has any plans to discuss the implications of the recent Italian referendum on nuclear power for Italian involvement in the European fast reactor collaboration programme, including Superphenix, with the Italian Ministry for Industry; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to discuss with representatives of ENEL the implications for its continued participation in the European fast reactor consortium of the result of the Italian referendum on nuclear power on 9 November;

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the implications of the recent Italian referendum on nuclear power for the continued participation of Italy in the European fast breeder reactor consortium;

(4) what consideration has been given to possible increases in the United Kingdom contribution to the research and development programme for the European fast breeder reactor development, in the light of the Italian referendum on 9 November, requiring Ente Nationale Per L'Energia, the Italian consortium partner, to withdraw from its share partnership in NERSA, the fast reactor development organisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The Italian Government are themselves now considering the implications of the results of the recent referendum.

"Land for Energy Development"

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what account his Department has taken of the report "Land for Energy Development" in reaching decisions concerning the location and construction of power stations in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Spicer: The siting of power stations in England and Wales is in the first instance a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. Questions concerning the siting of power stations in Scotland and Northern Ireland should be addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

WALES

NHS Tendering

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by each Welsh health authority the services put out to competitive tender, together with the percentage of the total budget of each authority which the tendered services represent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information on health authority services put out to competitive tender is not held centrally other than for domestic, catering and laundry services. For this information I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 6 November 1987, at column *895*.

Felinfach Creamery, Ceredigion

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit Felinfach creamery in Ceredigion to discuss future policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Not at the present time.

Road Improvement (Aberaeron-Aberarth)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans during the next 12 months to improve the trunk road between Aberaeron and Aberarth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A scheme is in preparation to improve a section of the A487 trunk road between

Aberarth and Aberaeron where a landslip has necessitated the use of traffic lights. We cannot say at this stage when work is likely to commence.

Public Rights of Way (Gwynedd)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he will take to ensure that Gwynedd county council publishes a revised definition map of public rights of way in Gwynedd, pursuant to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The timetable for the production of the revised definitive map of public rights of way in Gwynedd is a matter for Gwynedd county council. I understand however that the definitive map showing those changes which did not attract objection will be made available for inspection by the public early in the new year.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide current figures of those on local authority housing waiting lists for *(a)* Torfaen *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Grist: Information about waiting lists for local authority accommodation is not held centrally.

Community Nursing Services

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish the report of the review of community nursing services in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I am publishing today the report of the review of community nursing services in Wales which was set up two years ago under the chairmanship of Mrs. Noreen Edwards, chairman of Gwynedd health authority. Mrs. Edwards and her review group have completed a wide-ranging examination of nursing services in the community. In doing so, they have not confined themselves to specific community nursing issues but have looked at the wider primary care setting in which such services are delivered, covering such important matters as relations with general medical practitioners and the patient's access to services. I think it appropriate, therefore, that this report should be published today alongside the Government's White Paper on primary health care so that both documents can be read in conjunction with one another.

In all, Mrs. Edwards' report contains 36 recommendations—on nursing in the community; on teamwork in primary health care; on the planning and management of primary health care; and on nurse education and training. I believe that the report is a very valuable one in the context of the public consideration of community nursing and primary care matters, upon which Wales has its own distinctive contribution to make, as the White Paper makes clear. It is my intention to consult widely on all the recommendations in the report with the exception of those concerning nurse education and training which, as the report acknowledges are covered by consideration of the UKCC's proposals in relation to Project 2000. I have arranged therefore for copies to be distributed throughout the Health Service in Wales and to the various professional groups. I have asked that their comments on the report be submitted to me within the next six months. Texts of the report have also been placed in the Library of both Houses and I have arranged for copies to be issued to all Members having constituencies in Wales.

Arrangements were made for the report's translation at the earliest possible moment, but I regret that this is not completed. However, I thought that it would be right to go ahead with publication today to keep in step with the issue of the White Paper and I hope that the Welsh version of the report will be available very soon. The separate summary of the report's conclusions and recommendations is available in both Welsh and English versions.

Job Creation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs have been created for men and how many for women in Wales in each of the last five years by new inward investment from overseas; how many of these are part-time; and what is his estimate of new jobs in the current years from overseas investment.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Detailed information is available only for those projects which have benefited from regional assistance. Since 1982, a total of 235 inward investment projects promising 18,500 jobs have received job-related assistance.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training schemes have been run by voluntary organisations for each year since 1983.

Mr. Cope: The table below shows the number of YTS schemes run by voluntary organisations in 1983-84, 1985-86, 1986-87, and at 31 October 1987. Information for 1984-85 is not available.

	Number
One Year YTS	
1983-84[1]	752
1985-86[1]	526
Two Year YTS	
1986-87[2]	345
1987-88[2]	361

Source:
[1] YTS Providers Survey.
[2] YTS Management Information System.

Hotel Staff

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the extent of recruitment of hotel staff in France, for want of people in Britain to fill full-time vacancies; and what steps his Department and the Manpower Services Commission are taking to help fill such vacancies from among the unemployed.

Mr. Lee: We believe that British hoteliers seeking staff from France do so mainly through non-official contacts, rather than the employment service. There is, therefore, no information available about the scale of recruitment. The British employment service has direct links with the French employment service, but no hotel workers have been recruited by this method in recent years. Within

Great Britain, the employment service and the Manpower Services Commission work together to help employers recruit and train the staff they need. The commission also supports initiatives by the hotel and catering industry training board to improve training and career arrangements, and funds provision of places on YTS and the job training scheme in hotel and catering occupations.

Work Permits

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits have been refused to foreign nationals, other than those from the EEC and the Republic of Ireland; and which were the six main countries of origin of those so refused, for each year since 1978.

Mr. Lee: This information is not collated centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

British Shipbuilders

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 9 November from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, regarding the payment of arrears of unemployment benefit to former employees of the British Shipbuilders group; what is the precise authority by which these payments have now been authorised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: The text of the letter dated 9 November is as follows:

Dear Norman,

Thank you for your letter of 25 September about the claims for arrears of unemployment benefit by former employees of the British Shipbuilders group, one of whom is Mr. John Scott of 14 Stonehaven Road, Greenock.

I am pleased to tell you that authority has now been given to issue payments equivalent to the unemployment benefit which would have been payable to those redundant employees who, for good reason, did not claim within the statutory time limit. Procedural instructions have been issued via regional offices, and those will shortly receive payment. People who, for one reason or another, cannot be paid any arrears will have been given a written explanation.

I hope this explains the position.

John Lee

The payments referred to in the letter have been made either in accordance with the normal statutory provisions governing the payment of unemployment or supplementary benefits or delegated authority by HM Treasury. I am pleased to say that the majority of arrears payments due to former employees of the British Shipbuilders group should have been made by the end of this month.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* details of the individual cases of fraud relating to the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom amounting to £350,000 in 1985 which were reported to the European Commission.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom notified 68 cases of CAP irregularities in 1986, most of which occurred in 1985 or earlier years, totalling some £500,000. Nearly all were failures to meet conditions of schemes, and fraud was not suspected.

There were only two significant cases where fraud might have been intended. One was a misdescription of meat for export for which £268,000 of export refunds were claimed. However, this was detected and no payment was made. The second was a fraudulent claim for monetary compensatory amounts on cattle. The £68,000 paid has been recovered.

Calves (Export)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live calves have been exported during the last 12 months; what were the corresponding figures for the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Calf exports over the 12 months October 1986 to September 1987 were 309,524 head. Corresponding figures for the last five years were as follows:

October—September figures

	Number of head
1981-82	244,401
1982-83	236,970
1983-84	218,726
1984-85	165,286
1985-86	164,877

Although the level of exports is currently higher than in recent years it is similar to the level in 1980 (298,752 head) and significantly lower than in the late 1970s when it reached a peak of 420,301 head in 1978.

Pollution

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will support work within the Oslo commission on the extension of the geographical coverage of the Oslo convention so as to include internal waters behind baseline with the aim of securing effective international surveillance over all dumping activities, and so as to expedite this work with the aim of reaching agreement in principle by 1 January 1988.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]*: Yes. This was a United Kingdom proposal.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in his review of his Department's research and development, he will make it his policy to give priority to the research programmes concerned with pollution of the North sea.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]*: This Department already accords a high priority to research work under its aquatic environment programme and the level of effort is kept under review.

Mr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department is conducting research into the build-up of nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients in the coastal waters of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]*: Such work is already in hand.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding tests by the United States Administration on a 12 warhead Trident missile; and what are the implications for the Trident missile refurbishment package in regard to the United Kingdom's deterrent.

Mr. Sainsbury: It would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific aspects of the Trident missile test programme being carried out by the United States. I can nevertheless assure the hon. Member that we remain in close touch with the United States Government about the Trident II system which the United Kingdom is purchasing from the United States and I am fully satisfied that the United Kingdom's requirements continue to be met.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a detailed breakdown of the costs of the Trident missile purchase agreement showing separately the cost of storing, maintaining and refitting replacement missiles as part of the package described in the debate in the House on 22 October, *Official Report*, columns 949-962.

Mr. Sainsbury: The cost of information is not broken down into the categories requested by the hon. Member. However, I can advise that under the missile processing agreement announced in 1982 the United Kingdom will pay $70 million as a contribution to the capital cost of jointly used facilities at King's bay and will meet the full cost of any additional construction investment costs at King's bay occasioned solely by United Kingdom missile processing. These costs have been taken into account in calculating the saving of £767 million arising from the decision to process missiles at King's bay.

The United Kingdom will be charged a percentage of the total King's bay running costs related to the United Kingdom share of the missile processing work load.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why he will not release information on the estimated proportion of the development and production costs of the warhead element of the Trident programme, attributable to (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 2 November at column *607*.

Army Air Corps (Beavers Replacement)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when a decision will be taken on the replacement aircraft for the Army Air Corps Beavers; and what consideration he has given to Pilatus Britten-Norman's Defender for this role.

Mr. Sainsbury: A contract has been let with Pilatus Britten-Norman to assess the suitability of Islander aircraft for this role. We hope to reach a decision on the procurement in the new year.

Office Technology

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he hopes to announce his decision on the proposed central headquarters office technology system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The aim of the corporate headquarters office technology system project is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry of Defence headquarters by providing secure, integrated office technology facilities to all staff. The first phase, involving the production of a detailed operational requirement (by independent consultants) was successfully completed in May. Approval was therefore given for phase 2 to proceed and four consortia of IT companies have just submitted their technical responses to the requirement. Following evaluation of these responses, we plan to invite bids for two competitive prototype systems, to be installed in two MOD headquarters buildings. Whether we proceed with phase 3 and replicate the winning system throughout MOD headquarters depends on phase 2 demonstrating both that the requirement can be met in the technical sense and that the potential benefits of phase 3 would justify the costs.

Weather Ships

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of weather ships attached to the meteorological service in 1979 and at the present; and if he will make a statement on the implications for surface weather forecasting, in the light of recent mis-forecasts.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* A number of European nations fund ocean weather stations collaboratively under the North Atlantic ocean station agreement. In 1979 a total of nine vessels were provided and manned by Norway, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and the USSR, to operate four permanent ocean weather stations under this agreement. The United Kingdom provided two ships. The NAOS programme now operates three ocean stations and the United Kingdom provides one ship.

Ocean weather stations provide only one source of offshore observations for weather forecasting. In recent years a number of other platforms have come into use including meteorological satellites, buoys and ships and aircraft on passage.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Deregulation

7. **Mr. Grylls:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his Department's deregulation initiatives.

Mr. Maude: The Government are committed to reducing the burdens on business — particularly small businesses — from legislative and administrative regulation. Prime responsibility for that task lies with individual departments, but work is co-ordinated by the enterprise and deregulation unit, now located in the Department of Trade and Industry. We aim to ensure that regulation which is unnecessary is avoided or removed; that essential regulation ismade less burdensome; and that proper

account of the cost to business is taken in all relevant policy decisions. My Department's own activities are of course carefully scrutinised within that programme.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's deregulation initiative.

Mr. Maude: The Government's work to reduce the burdens imposed on business by legislative and administrative regulation, which is co-ordinated by the enterprise and deregulation unit in my Department, continues to make progress broadly as set out in the report to Parliament "Encouraging Enterprise" published in May this year.

Telephone Boxes

16. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received any report from the director general of OFTEL on the quality of service at British Telecom phone boxes following OFTEL's report of 23 September.

Mr. Butcher: Not yet, though my right hon. and learned Friend and the director general discussed quality of service when they met last week. I understand that OFTEL and British Telecom expect to publish the results of their new monthly survey of call box services next week.

Electricity Charges

17. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he proposes to have any discussions with manufacturing industries regarding the implications of increased electricity charges in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend has discussed the implications of higher electricity charges with the director general of the CBI. Higher rates of return are required if the electricity supply industry is to finance the massive investment necessary in the 1990s. The effect on manufacturing industries will depend on a number of factors, including the movement of other costs.

Steel Industry

18. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community Commission about the future of the British steel industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I and other Ministers of the Twelve considered the Commission's proposals on the future of the European steel regime at an Industry Council on 21 September. There will be a further meeting of the Council on 8 December.

Support for Marketing Scheme

19. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his support for marketing scheme.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's support for marketing scheme assists independent firms with up to 500 employees with the costs of expert consultancy to develop or improve a strategic approach to marketing. The scheme was launched in September 1986 and by 31 March 1988 more than 1,400 projects will have been completed.

Film Industry

20. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the current state of the British film industry; and what information he has as to a number of films currently in production, or planned for production, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Investment in film production traditionally experiences cyclical downturns, and it is presently at a lower level than in recent years. However, figures prepared by the British Film and Television Producers Association indicate that in the first 10 months of this year investment was still substantial and exceeded £100 million.

Manufacturing Industry

21. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the growth rate of output in manufacturing industry since 1979; and how this compares with comparable figures for other industrial countries.

Mr. Butcher: Between 1979 and the third quarter of 1987 manufacturing output grew at an annual average rate of 0·2 per cent. But it grew by over 6 per cent. in the latest year.

Between 1979 and the first half of 1987, manufacturing output increased at an annual average rate of 2·5 per cent. in the United States of America, 3·5 per cent. in Japan, and 1 per cent. in Germany while it fell at an average rate of 0·5 per cent. per year in France.

Trade Figures

22. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the latest trade figures.

66. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the latest trade figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the year ending October 1987 there was a deficit of £1,053 million on the current account.

Overseas Trade Figures

23. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the implications for the economy of the October overseas trade figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures for visible trade for the year to October 1987 show deficits of £5·5 billion in manufactured goods and £5·5 billion in other non-oil goods and a surplus of £3·5 billion in oil. Current estimates of invisible trade indicate a surplus of £6·5 billion for the year to October. Thus the balance on current account is a deficit of £1·1 billion. These figures are broadly consistent with the estimates for the year 1987 given in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

General Motors

24. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the United Kingdom management of General Motors, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet had an opportunity to meet the management of

General Motors. I myself have met them a number of times and discussed a range of issues. I plan to visit Vauxhall's Luton site shortly for a plant tour.

Design Promotion

25. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of the Design Council to discuss the Government's policy for the promotion of design.

Mr. Butcher: On 18 November.

National Quality Campaign

26. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the national quality campaign.

Mr. Butcher: The campaign is now well into its fifth year and, at a conservative estimate, has reached over 60,000 firms. It has played an important part in encouraging a growing number of businesses to adopt the companywide approach to quality that is vital to their competitiveness.

Financial Services Sector

27. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest available figures for the number of people in the United Kingdom financial services sector and the contribution of the industry to gross national product and the balance of payments.

Mr. Maude: The latest figures available for the banking, finance and insurance sector are for 1986 when approximately 1·2 million people were employed, some five per cent. of all United Kingdom employment. The sector accounted for about eight per cent. of the total domestic output of the United Kingdom economy. The sector contributed a surplus of over £9 billion to the balance of payments.

Japan

28. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is satisfied that trade with Japan in manufactured goods is on a fully reciprocal basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I remain dissatisfied. Her Majesty's Government strongly support the European Commission in its representations to the Jananese authorities seeking the removal of unfair barriers to trade in particular areas.

54. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current value of United Kingdom exports to Japan; how this compares with the same period in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the period January to October of this year United Kingdom total exports to Japan were £1·2 billion compared with £1 billion in the same period last year, an increase of 20 per cent. Exports of manufactured goods were up by 30 per cent.

Clothing Exports

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the most recent figures available on United Kingdom exports of clothing to the European Community; and what were the figures over the comparable period in 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the period January to October of this year United Kingdom exports of clothing to the other countries of the European Community were valued at £678 million compared with £527 million in the same period of last year.

Motor Car Imports

30. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for sales of imported motor cars.

Mr. Atkins: In the first 10 months of 1987 some 920,000 imported cars were registered in the United Kingdom, accounting for 51·7 per cent. of the United Kingdom market, compared with 945,000 in the corresponding period of 1986—56·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom market.

Pearson Group (Takeover)

31. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about any proposed takeover of the Pearson Group.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Eight letters have been received by my Department including one from the hon. Gentleman. Major newspaper mergers are regulated by special provisions in the Fair Trading Act 1973 and we shall rigorously examine all applications for consent which are put to us.

Inner City Task Forces

32. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of his Department's budget will be allocated to inner city task forces in each of the next three years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I would not wish to anticipate the outcome of the current review of priorities within the Department's programme of activities.

Design

33. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what role he sees for design in education and training.

Mr. Butcher: At primary and secondary level our objective is to encourage an appreciation of the various aspects of design and its implications for young people in their potential roles both as consumers and employees.

At tertiary level the aim is to generate among those going into industry and commerce the right kinds and mix of design skills which companies need, and managers who can exploit design in their businesses.

The training requirement is to ensure that both designers and managers continuously update their knowledge of design to help it make its full contribution to the generation of national wealth.

Telecommunications Services

34. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how competition in the market for

telecommunications services has increased since 1979; and what information he has on the level of competition in the home markets of the United Kingdom's European partners.

Mr. Butcher: There has been a significant growth in competition in the United Kingdom. Competition exists at the network level following the licensing of Mercury Communications Ltd. and the two cellular radio operators. Value added and data services provided over the network have been completely liberalised. The level of competition in the home markets of other member states of the Community is described in the European Commission's Green Paper on the development of the common market for telecommunications services and equipment (COM(87)(29) final) a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Northern Region (Funding)

35. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the likely effects on the northern region of his review of regional funding.

Mr. Atkins: Future expenditure in the northern region on measures of regional support will be dependent on the volume and quality of applications under the relevent schemes.

Furniture (Flammability)

36. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, since the introduction of the furniture flammability match test, how many prosecutions have been made under the new regulations; and what percentage related to imported furniture.

Mr. Maude: The enforcement of regulations made under consumer safety and protection Acts is undertaken by local authority trading standards departments. There is no central register of prosecutions for offences under safety regulations. I have asked the local authorities co-ordinating body on trading standards to assemble information on prosecutions under the Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations 1980 if only for the last 12 months, and I shall write to the hon. Member when it is available. Since the regulations apply to all domestic furniture regardless of country of origin, it is unlikely that the percentage relating to imported furniture will be shown.

Airbus

37. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received any recent representations from the United States authorities on the financing of Airbus.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend has not received recently any direct representations from the United States authorities on the financing of Airbus. My right hon. and learned Friend and Ministers from other Airbus partner countries took part in a meeting in London on 27 October between Ambassador Yeutter, United States trade representative, and Commissioner Willy de Clercq. As a result of that meeting, joint principles and objectives were agreed for continued negotiations between the two sides on Government support in the aircraft sector.

Manufacturing Industry

38. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recently available figure for manufacturing investment.

Mr. Butcher: Provisional estimates of investment in the third quarter of 1987 — the most recent available — together with other investment figures were published on 19 November 1987 in the form of a press release. The estimate for manufacturing industry, including leased assets, is £1·9 billion at 1980 prices.

55. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the rate investment by manufacturing industry; and how it compares with the rate in 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The latest year for which investment statistics are available is 1986, when investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, was £7·1 billion at 1980 prices. The corresponding investment in 1979 was £8·2 billion at 1980 prices. The latest investment intentions survey carried out by my Department indicates that in 1987 investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, will be about 4 per cent. higher than in 1986.

Manufacturing Output

39. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's assessment of the main constraints on increases in manufacturing output.

Mr. Butcher: The main constraint on increases in manufacturing output is the ability of United Kingdom manufacturers to produce the goods demanded in the market at the right price. Their growing success in achieving this is shown by the fact that manufacturing is currently growing by 5 per cent. a year.

British Telecom

40. **Mr. Darling:** To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next hopes to meet the chairman of British Telecom; and if he will make a statememt.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met the chairman of British Telecommunications plc last week. I have no plans to meet him again in the immediate future. We discussed a number of issues of mutual interest.

Government Task Forces

41. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many officers of his Department are employed in Government task forces; and what is the cost.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Fifty-nine officers of my Department are employed in the Government task forces of the inner cities initiative. This number includes staff on loan from other Departments who are paid by mine. In addition, there are staff from other Departments, from the voluntary and private sectors, and from local authorities, most of whom are paid for wholly or in part by their parent bodies. The task force running costs borne by the Government are approximately £1 million for the current financial year.

CBI

42. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the director general of the Confederation of British Industry; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I last met the director general of the Confederation of British Industry on 11 November. We discussed a number of issues of interest to industry and commerce.

Exports

43. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what factors he attributes the decline in Britain's share of manufactured exports and the trend of Britain's export performance in comparison with other European manufacturing nations.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom share of manufactured exports has not declined over the last five years. Since the middle of 1986 our exports have grown faster than those of the other European manufacturing nations.

Civil Research and Development

44. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to promote United Kingdom spending on civil research and development.

Mr. Butcher: In encouraging enterprise, the Government's main aim has been to establish a favourable economic climate with low inflation and taxes. In this way, the health and profitability of companies and their ability to increase their own spending on research and development have been facilitated. On further specific measures aimed at encouraging R and D, my right hon. and noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and I are currently reviewing all aspects of our Department's innovation policy. I hope to be in a position to make a statement on the outcome of our review early in the new year.

European Space Agency

45. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Space Agency meeting in The Hague.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on 12 November at column 577.

British Steel Corporation

46. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress in restoring the British Steel Corporation to commercial viability.

Mr. Atkins: BSC's financial progress in recent years has been impressive. Whereas in the early 1980s BSC was making heavy losses, in 1986-87 its profit after all deductions was £178 million, representing a return of 6·5 on net assets employed at year end. Its performance in the present year is expected to continue this improvement. BSC has received no Government financial assistance since 1985 and its activities are now entirely self-financing.

Cornwall

47. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on regional development funding for Cornwall, in the light of the new objectives established by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: I am sure that Cornwall, in common with other areas, will continue to take advantage of my Department's schemes of national and regional assistance as they reflect the Department's objectives of promoting enterprise and creating prosperity.

Invisible Exports

48. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for United Kingdom invisible exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The lastest estimates of our invisibles transactions for the 12 months ending June 1987 are as follows:

	Credits	*Debits*	*£ million Balance*
Services	25,822	20,516	+5,306
Interest, profits, dividends	48,107	42,654	+5,453
Transfers	4,182	7,157	−2,975
All invisibles	78,111	70,327	+7,784

Postal Services (Rural Areas)

49. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will discuss postal services in rural areas.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the Post Office from time to time to discuss matters of current interest including, as appropriate, postal services in rural areas.

Job Creation (Foreign Investment)

50. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many jobs have been created in the United Kingdom bhyforeign direct investment over the last year.

Mr. Alan Clark: From the information provided to the Invest in Britain Bureau by the companies themselves, it is estimated that more than 23,000 jobs will have been created as a result of inward investment decisions taken in the last year (the year to the third quarter of 1987). Many more jobs will have been safeguarded. Figures relating jobs to foreign direct investment flows are not available.

Alvey Programme

51. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: We are still considering the recommendations contained in the IT86 committee report as part of our review of the priorities in the field of research and development for the Department of Trade and Industry. A statement will be made as soon as possible.

Public Purchasing Initiative

53. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made with the implementation of the guidelines of the public purchasing initiative.

Mr. Butcher: At the beginning of the year, the Government disseminated consolidated guidelines on public purchasing throughout the public sector. Consistent with our international obligations, these encourage purchasers to work more effectively with suppliers to obtain better value for money and to help improve their competitiveness. For example, we are seeing welcome progress in National Health Service procurement, where my Department is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Security and health authorities: and we are strengthening links with local authority purchasing bodies. In its recently published report to the Prime Minister, the central unit on purchasing acknowledges that there is much to do in the area of central Government purchasing and we intend to pursue this vigorously.

Leicester (Task Force)

56. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will initiate a task force to cover the outer city area of Leicester covering Northfields, Netherhall and Thurnby Lodge.

Mr. Atkins: As the hon. Member knows, there is already a Government task force in Leicester covering the inner city area of Highfields. I have no plans to initiate a task force in outer Leicester covering the Northfields, Netherhall and Thurnby Lodge areas.

North Peckham Task Force

57. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about expenditure on the North Peckham task force.

Mr. Atkins: Since the Government's North Peckham task force was set up in 1986, some £2 million of Government funds have been committed for projects benefiting the residents of the area. Of this, £900,000 has come from funds available to all task forces. In addition, £10,000 has been committed by the private sector and £113,000 by the local authority.

Manufacturing Profitability

58. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for the profitability of manufacturing companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: In 1986 the net real rate of return at current replacement cost for manufacturing companies was 7 per cent. This exceeds the peak reached in the last economic cycle in 1978 and is the highest since 1973.

Copley Marshall and Co. Ltd. (Import Licence)

59. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why, in the light of the fact that such licences have been issued in similar circumstances in the past, his Department has refused Copley Marshall and Company Ltd., of New Mill, Huddersfield, an import licence for a consignment of Egyptian yarn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Egyptian export certificate provided by Copley Marshall and Company in support of its import licence application is valid only for goods which are to be re-exported outside the European Community. Since the consignment in question is not intended for re-export, the company was advised that a licence could not be issued until it had obtained the correct form of export certificate from the Egyptian authorities.

I regret to say that an import licence was previously issued to this company in similar circumstances in error when incorrect documentation was not detected. But this does not justify the issue of a licence in the present case. It remains the responsibility of the importer to ensure that the correct documentation is submitted with all import licence applications.

Steel

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the likely consequences for the United Kingdom steel industry of recent European Economic Community decisions on steel.

Mr. Atkins: No decisions have yet been taken on the future EC steel regime. The Commission's proposals were considered by the Industry Council on 21 September. Following the Council, "three wise men" were appointed to advise on how guarantees of restructuring adequate to ensure the future viability of the EC steel industry could be obtained. Further consideration will take place at an Industry Council on 8 December.

Civil Research and Development

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has of the projected level of spending by British industry on civil research and development.

Mr. Butcher: The latest information on expenditure on research and development performed by United Kingdom industry relates to 1985 and was published in *British Business* on 24 July. Information is not collected on the intended levels of spending on research and development by United Kingdom industry.

Industrial Competitiveness

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the international competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the second quarter of 1987—the latest period for which figures are available—relative unit labour costs in United Kingdom manufacturing industry were 6 per cent. lower than in the corresponding quarter of 1986.

Shipbuilding (Scotland)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current state of the shipbuilding industry in Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd and the British Shipbuilders yards in Scotland all have substantial orders.

Scott Lithgow Ltd, transferred to the private sector as a rig builder, is presently completing the Ocean Alliance rig for Britoil plc. Other, smaller, yards have or are seeking orders for fishing boats, naval and merchant ships and ship conversion and repair work.

Electrical Appliances

64. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will seek powers to require all electrical appliances to be sold to the end user complete with the appropriate safety plug.

Mr. Maude: No. This is a commercial matter for the appliance manufacturer or retailers to decide in the light of consumer demand.

On the safety aspects, detailed guidance on the connection of plugs must be provided by law and consumers are free to choose whether to connect the plugs themselves or, if they do not feel capable, to seek technical assistance at additional cost. The safety of the plugs themselves is governed by the Plugs and Sockets Etc. (Safety) Regulations 1987.

Chemical Industry

65. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the state of the United Kingdom chemical industry.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom chemical industry is in a good state. According to the most recent reports, production generally is increasing, with many plants working at or near capacity. Costs are now more or less in line with those achieved in other countries, and profitability in most sectors is good. Strong domestic and overseas demand is reflected in growing import and export volumes in many products.

Inner Cities

67. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of *(a)* his time and *(b)* that of the other Ministers in his Department is devoted to policy on the inner cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend will be aware of the importance the Government attach to policy on the inner cities, and that many Departments have a part to play in it. My Department has a significant contribution to make and a lot of time and that of my colleagues in DTI is devoted to policy on the inner cities.

Space Research

68. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has regarding private sector co-operation in space research between the United Kingdom and overseas companies.

Mr. Butcher: International co-operation is an important aspect of space research especially in European Space Agency projects. As a result, United Kingdom companies have well established relationships with other European companies both in bidding for ESA projects and for commercial contracts e.g. those let by Inmarsat, Eutelsat etc.

Industrial Investment

69. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest forecast increase in industrial investment in 1987.

Mr. Butcher: The latest investment intentions survey carried out by my Department indicates that in 1987 investment in manufacturing industry, including leased assets, will be about 4 per cent. higher than the estimated investment of £7·1 billion, at 1980 prices, in 1986.

Rover Group

70. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what success the new chairman of the Rover Group has had in stemming the losses of the company.

Mr. Atkins: Rover Group's half year results were published on 5 August. In the first six months of 1987, compared with the same period in 1986, the turnover of the businesses continuing within the group, increased by 27 per cent. to £1,580 million with unit sales up 11 per cent. to 259,000. Exports accounted for over one third of unit sales and turnover. Improving operations resulted in a 90 per cent. reduction in loss before interest and taxation to £7·3 million and 80 per cent. reduction after interest, tax and extraordinary items to £42 million. Furthermore, the RG board announced on 18 November that the group expects to make a profit before interest and taxation in the current financial year ending 31 December 1987.

Exporters (Assistance)

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any intention to provide export finance assistance for consumable commodities to developing countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The normal facilities of the Export Credits Guarantee Department are available in support of exports of consumable commodities to developing countries.

Charnley Davies Group

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Official Receiver in the case of the Charnley Davies Group to report to him; and what action he will take to ensure a speedy conclusion to the inquiries.

Mr. Maude: Winding up orders were made against Charnley Davies Group Limited and 12 group companies on 9 June 1987. The Official Receiver submitted a preliminary notification of his investigations to my Department on 17 June 1987 and a first interim report on 20 August 1987. His investigations into the affairs of those companies are continuing in which he is co-operating with the Crown Prosecution Service and the West Yorkshire police who will decide on and have the conduct of any proceedings.

Torvinstyle Properties Ltd.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the police have now completed their investigations into Torvinstyle Properties Ltd.; and whether a report has yet been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Maude: The police investigations are continuing. When they are concluded, the results of the inquiries will be reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Departmental Finance

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the main reasons for the changes in the planning totals for the Department of Trade and Industry for 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The increase in forecast outturn for 1987-88 as against the planning total published in Cmnd. 56 reflects increased regional expenditure, transferred responsibilities for the inner cities programme, and launch aid for the Airbus A330/340. The higher planning total for 1988-89 also reflects the importance that we attach to programmes directed at economic growth and wealth creation. Further details will be given in the public expenditure White Paper in January.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide a revised version of table 3.5 from the public expenditure White Paper Cmnd. 56-II, in the light of the Autumn Statement in so far as such information is known or available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A revised version of table 3.5 from Cmnd. 56-II will be included in the next public expenditure White Paper to be published in January.

Film Industry

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the United Kingdom earned from the export trade of its commercial film industry in 1967, 1977, 1983, 1985, and 1986.

Mr. Maude: The information is given in the table. It comprises United Kingdom exports of cinematographic film and the receipts of United Kingdom film companies from performances overseas of their films and from production services provided to overseas film companies.

	United Kingdom export of Cinematographic film[1]	*Receipts from overseas from performances and production*	*Total £ million*
1967	7·8	41·4	49·4
1977	24·3	48·4	72·7
1983	29·1	193·4	222·5
1985	42·7	238·6	281·3
1986	44·5	186·8	231·3

[1] SITC 882·24 and 883.

Telephone Answering Machines

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will raise with Oftel when next he meets the dirctor general the sale of telephone answering machines which can be accessed by simple voice command and where the taped message is expunged as it is played back to any caller, irrespective of their right of access to that message.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster met the Director General of Telecommunications last week. As they have no plans to meet in the immediate future, I am arranging for this matter to be drawn to the director general's attention so that he may reply to my hon. Friend direct.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Paraguay

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government has made of the human rights record of Paraguay; and what effect this has had on the level of diplomatic relations, arms sales and trade links between Paraguay and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Our concern at the continuing abuse of human rights in Paraguay has been made clear in Asuncion, both bilaterally and with the Twelve, and in appropriate international fora. My right hon. and learned Friend expressed that concern directly to the Paraguayan Foreign Minister when he visited the United Kingdom in March 1986.

We have normal trade relations with Paraguay, but are not aware of any recent sale of weapons nor of any in prospect. Any proposals for sales would be considered in the light of our well-known policy, which precludes the supply of defence items that we judge likely to be used for internal repression.

Chile

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government has made of the human rights record of Chile; and what effects this has had on the level of diplomatic relations, arms sales and trade links between Chile and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: We have made clear our concern about continuing human rights abuses in Chile both with the Twelve and bilaterally, most recently on 23 October when the Chilean Foreign Minister called on me and my right hon. and learned Friend. We maintain normal trading links, but our policy precludes the supply of defence items which we judge likely to be used for internal repression.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 23 and 24 November.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 23-24 November. The discussions were mainly about the financial situation in the European Community and the crucial issue of agricultural reform.

At the same time as Foreign Ministers were meeting in Brussels, a meeting of the Agriculture Council was taking place to discuss proposals for stabilisers for all agricultural commodities.

My right hon. and learned Friend made clear that binding agreement on effective stabilisers was essential for an overall agreement to be reached at the European Council on the future financing of the Community. Every attempt to water down proposed stabilisers only increased the risk of failure at Copenhagen. Discussion of these and other aspects of the negotiations will be pursued at a special meeting of EC Foreign Ministers in Brussels on 29-30 November.

On the other issues, the Council agreed a negotiating mandate for a trade and economic co-operation agreement between the European Communities and the Gulf Co-operation Council. The Council also agreed the Commission's recommendation to accept the latest Japanese offer in the GATT article XXIV.6 negotiations with Japan.

The Council discussed proposals for Council regulations laying down maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs after a nuclear accident, and extending the arrangements governing food imports following the Chernobyl accident. It decided that a further discussion should take place at the December Foreign Affairs Council.

Meeting in European political co-operation, Ministers discussed East—West matters, the middle east and the Iran—Iraq war. My right hon. and learned Friend drew my colleagues' attention to Libya's involvement in the Eksund arms shipment. We and other member states will be following up the implications of this very serious affair.

Community Foreign Ministers issued a statement condemning South Africa's military incursion into Angola and calling for the immediate withdrawal of South African troops. We also issued statements expressing continued support and encouragement for the peace process in central America, and expressing support for the process of re-establishing a democracy in Haiti, where elections will be held on 29 November. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

THE ARTS

Nitrate Film Stock

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister for the Arts how much nitrate film stock has been preserved for the aid of financial support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund in each of the years since the fund was established.

Mr. Luce: The grants made by the National Heritage Memorial Fund for each of the years since its establishment in 1980 are set out in the table. The total footage indicated to date is not comprehensive, since work is still in progress based on the grants in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Grants given by the National Heritage Memorial Fund for the restoration of nitrate film stock

	Grant £	*Total grant* £	*Approximate footage*	*Total footage*
1980-81				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	62,500	62,500	—	—
1981-82				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	100,000	162,500	635,000	635,000
1982-83				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	120,000	282,500	815,000	1,450,000
North West Film Archive (Manchester Polytechnic)	9,275	291,775	35,619	1,485,619
Scottish Film Archive (Scottish Film Council)	6,000	297,775	55,000	1,540,619
1983-84				
Motoring archive film (National Motor Museum Trust, Beaulieu)	12,400	310,175	19,100	1,559,719
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	—	310,175	144,000	1,703,719
1984-85				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	89,375	399,550	—	1,703,719
1986-87				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	100,000	499,550	133,000	1,836,719
1987-88				
National Film Archive (British Film Institute)	30,000	529,550	[1]126,000	1,962,719
Motoring Archive film (National Motor Museum Trust, Beaulieu)	10,000	539,550	[2]—	—

[1] Work still in progress with funds from 1986-87 and 1987-88
[2] Work still in progress

Librarians

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister for the Arts what guidance his Department issues on the recommended ratio of librarians to population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: My Department issues no guidance on this.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Overseas Assets

74. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of United Kingdom holdings of overseas assets; what contribution the income from these assets makes to the balance of payments; and what are the comparable figures relating to the United Kingdom's overseas competitors' holdings of foreign assets.

Mr. Major: The level of United Kingdom net overseas assets at the end of 1986 was £114 billion—second only to Japan. The annual net income from these assets was £4½ billion.

Charitable Donations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Treasury of abolishing the higher rates relief limit for charitable covenants in 1986-87 and the first six months of 1987-88; and how much of the cost was attibutable to such donations to professional arts organisations with charitable status in the same periods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost to the Exchequer in 1986-87 of abolishing the limit for higher rate relief for charitable covenants made by individuals was about £1 million. This represents the repayments of basic rate tax on new covenants over £10,000. The associated claims for higher rate relief are unlikely to affect tax payments made before the end of 1986-87. Costs for later years will be higher, but information for the first six months of 1987-88 is not available. It is not possible to identify separately donations to professional arts organisations with charitable status.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Treasury of introducing relief for charitable donations through payroll deduction schemes in its first six months from 6 April; and how much of the cost was attributable to such donations to professional arts organisations with charitable status.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost of tax relief for donations to charity made through payroll deduction schemes is estimated at about £80,000 in the six months from 6 April 1987. This represents only the first six months of the new relief. The number of payroll deduction schemes set up by employers is rising steadily and is now over 1,800. The cost of the relief will therefore increase. No information is available on the destination of donations.

Adjustment Policies

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps within the International Monetary Fund to make future adjustment policies the same as those set out in the UNICEF report "Adjustment With a Human Face".

Mr. Lawson: The IMF recognises the need to take account of the effects of economic adjustment on the poor. We shall continue to encourage this approach in both the design and implementation of fund-supported programmes. Policy reforms are essential in the poorest countries if they are to achieve faster economic growth, and better living conditions for all. In many cases adjustment measures are of direct benefit to the very poorest groups in developing countries—for instance the rural poor.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to encourage greater use of personal equity plans.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government are committed to encouraging as many people as possible to take out a personal equity plan. I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 26 October 1987 at column 34, to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), in which I announced a number of simplifications of the scheme which will come into effect next January.

Sub-contractors (Payment)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what safeguards exist to ensure that small companies which are sub-contracted to carry out central Government works receive moneys due to them from the main contractors.

Mr. Brooke: For Government works contracts, the contracting authority's legal relationship is with the main contractor. Other than in special circumstances, the relationship between the main contractor and its sub-contractors, including those nominated by the authority, is a matter for the parties concerned. Any safeguards that exist should therefore be contained within the contractual arrangements between those parties.

European Currency Unit

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the use of the European currency unit coin in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have no plans for introducing a European currency unit coin in the United Kingdom.

BP Share Issue

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the BP share buy-back offer at the reserve price of 70p per share is open to shareholders in the United States of America.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: The share purchase arrangement is available in the United Kingdom to domestic and overseas holders of partly paid shares.

Derelict Urban Land

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to levy a tax on the ownership of derelict urban land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no such plans.

Tax Evasion (Prosecutions)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have been prosecuted for tax evasion since May 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: The details in respect of the Inland Revenue for the financial years from 1 April 1979 are:

Number of persons prosecuted

Year	*Number*
1979-80	150
1980-81	189
1981-82	176
1982-83	142
1983-84	159
1984-85	239
1985-86	321
1986-87	326

These figures include successful prosecutions by the police for tax frauds in connection with the construction industry tax deduction scheme. The numbers relating to this category were:

Year	*Number*
1979-80	10
1980-81	15
1981-82	7
1982-83	3
1983-84	5
1984-85	8
1985-86	63
1986-87	89

The details for VAT prosecutions from the financial year beginning 1 April 1979, which do not include prosecutions of companies or other legal persons, are:

Number of persons prosecuted

Year	*Number*
1979-80	127
1980-81	133
1981-82	131
1982-83	195
1983-84	214
1984-85	260
1985-86	379
1986-87	299

Government Data Network

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government Departments will be linked by the Government data network; and whether there will be a link-up with the police national computer.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 24 November 1987]*: It is expected that the proposed Government data network would be used initially by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Inland Revenue. There are no plans for the police national computer to use the network.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

House of Representatives

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will introduce legislation to change the name of the House of Commons to House of Representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will set out the parameters, in terms of weekly income and implied tax rates, of the poverty trap which would be created by the proposed community charge; and what is his estimate of the numbers of people that would be affected, set out in appropriate income bands.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

This information cannot be worked out at present, both because certain operational details of the community charge rebate scheme have yet to be decided, and also because insufficient data are held centrally to permit the setting up of appropriate models.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 17 November *Official Report* columns *483-4*, on the transitional arrangements for the poll tax, he will give the figures for households which will experience an increase of *(a)* 50 per cent. or more and *(b)* 80 per cent. or more in local tax bills for the illustrative year 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: Based on 1987-88 spending, I estimate that in 1990-91, 3 million households might face an increase of more than 50 per cent. in their local tax bills as a result of the introduction of the new system; and that 1·8 million might face an increase of 80 per cent. or more. However, as I emphasised in my answer to the hon. Gentleman on 9 November, at column *14*, this outcome need not arise if local authorities start now to reduce expenditure.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the relationship between increases in expenditure per adult and increases in poll tax, set out in his reply of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *819*, are affected by his announcement regarding transitional arrangements for the introduction of poll tax.

Mr. Howard: The transitional arrangements will make no difference to the impact on an authority's gross community charge of an increase in expenditure. During the transitional period, as a result of the phasing out of the safety net and, where appropriate, domestic rates, there will be changes in net community charges which are not related to changes in expenditure. Even then, the contribution of overspending to community charges will remain clear — for every £1 per head change in expenditure the community charge will be £1 more or less than it would otherwise have been.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the £75 limit on safety nets referred to in his reply of 17 November, *Official Report*, columns *483-4*, is a cash amount for the year 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: That is the Government's intention.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give illustrative figures showing which local authorities would remain on the maximum safety net for poll tax if it were *(a)* £90, *(b)* £100 and *(c)* £125.

Mr. Howard: The figures show the areas with the highest contributions per adult to the safety net if no maximum contribution were set. The figures are based on 1987-88 budgeted spending.

	£
South Bucks	191
Chiltern	182
Westminster	132
Elmbridge	128
Wycombe	121
Epsom and Ewell	118
Epping Forest	108
Three Rivers	108
Windsor and Maidenhead	106
Surrey Heath	101
Wokingham	100
Waverley	99
Solihull	97
Barnet	95
Hertsmere	94
Woking	94
Rochford	92
St. Albans	92
Southend-on-Sea	91

Inner Cities

71. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current ratio of public to private investment in the inner cities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The current ratio of public to private investment for projects assisted by urban development grant is 1:4. The equivalent ratio for the two original urban development corporations for investment secured up to the end of 1986-87 is 1:5. Schemes secured in the current year would increase the UDC ratio significantly.

73. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current level of private investment in the inner cities attributable to Government initiatives.

Mr. Trippier: In the current year I expect private sector investment secured as a result of my Department's initiatives to be in excess of £1,300 million.

Civil Engineering

72. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the prospects for Britain's civil engineering industry during the next 12 months.

Mr. Trippier: The indications are that the strong trend of growth in new orders for civil engineering contracts will continue. Major new contracts — the Channel tunnel,

Sizewell and the Dartford crossing—and the increased spending on roads envisaged in the Autumn Statement look set to reinforce this trend.

Pesticides

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the likely implications for the British sea and river environments of the pesticides and other chemical wastes that pollute them; and what measures he intends to take to reduce the continuing pollution of rivers and oceans.

Mr. Moynihan: The rivers and coastal waters of the United Kingdom are among the cleanest in Europe. Discharges of potentially polluting substances are controlled by water authorities in England and Wales (and by river purification boards in Scotland) under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 with the aim of maintaining and, where necessary, improving water quality.

The Government have, however, announced their intention to adopt a more precautionary approach to controlling inputs to rivers and estuaries of the most dangerous substances. I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 18 November. This approach will involve the minimisation of direct discharges of a limited list of the most dangerous substances, as well as greater attention to inputs from diffuse or indirect sources. The Government have also announced its intention to put the existing quality objectives for rivers and estuaries on a statutory footing, and are considering a number of other measures to strengthen pollution control.

With regard to pollution of the sea, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be hosting the second international conference on the North sea, in London, on 24 and 25 November. We will be discussing with Ministers from other participating countries what actions may be needed to safeguard the quality of the marine environment of the North sea.

Council Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he now proposes to increase the percentage of capital receipts from the sale of council houses that local authorities can use for housing purposes.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on 4 November at column *735*.

Garelochhead Bypass

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he authorised the use of Gopher Ltd. as immediate sub-contractors on the Garelochhead bypass project;

(2) if he is satisfied with the sub-contractural arrangements entered into by the Miller Group in respect of the Property Services Agency contract for Garelochhead bypass; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will estimate the value of the work carried out by C. K. Davis, as a secondary sub-contractor, on the Garelochhead bypass;

(4) if he will indicate the value of the Garelochhead bypass contract; and how much of this sum has been paid to Miller Group as main contractors;

(5) how much of the work on the Garelochhead bypass was carried out by C. K. Davis; and how much money he has received from public funds in respect of his contract.

Mr. Chope: The latest estimated final value of the Garelochhead bypass contract is £6·295 million, of which some £5·372 million has so far been paid to the Miller Group as the main contractor. Miller Group's sub-contract arrangements are a commercial matter between them and their sub-contractors.

Howbury Park

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on the public inquiry into the Howbury Park development proposals.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend expects to receive the inspector's report shortly. He will consider the matters raised and issue his decision as soon as possible thereafter.

Ramsar Convention

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas that have been listed under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom Government have listed 32 sites under the Ramsar convention, covering nearly 100,000 hectares, as follows:

Bridgwater Bay: Somerset
Bure Marshes: Norfolk
Cors Fochno and Dyfi: Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys
Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere: Norfolk
Lindisfarne: Northumberland
Loch Duidibeg, Loch a'Machair: and Loch Stilligary: Western Isles
Loch Leven: Tayside
Loch Lomond: Strathclyde, Central
Loch Neagh and Lough Beg: Antrim, Londonderry, Tyrone, Armagh Down
Minsmere—Walberswick: Suffolk
North Norfolk Coast: Norfolk
Ouse Washes: Cambridgeshire and Norfolk
Rannoch Moor: Tayside
Abberton Reservoir: Essex
Cairngorm Lochs: Grampian Highland
Claish Moss: Highland
Loch Lintrathen: Tayside
Rostherne Mere: Cheshire
Silver Flowe: Dumfries and Galloway
Chesil Beach and the Fleet: Dorset
The Dee Estuary: Merseyside, Cheshire, Clwyd
Derwent Ings: North Yorkshire, Humberside
Holburn Moss: Northumberland
Irthinghead Mires: Cumbria, Northumberland
The Swale: Kent
Alt Estuary: Merseyside
Leighton Moss: Lancashire
Martin Mere: Lancashire
Loch Eye: Highland
Loch Skene: Grampian
Rockliffe Marshes: Cumbria
Chichester and Langstone Harbours: West Sussex, Hampshire

Grant-Related Expenditure

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to set grant-related expenditure assessments for each metropolitan fire and civil defence authority for 1988-89 by reference to

original respective redetermination submissions for 1987-88, updated for inflation and other committed expenditure.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State's proposals for the 1988-89 RSG settlement are set out in the consultation paper sent to local authorities on 27 October, a copy of which is in the Library.

Land for Energy Development

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each organisation which was represented on the working party which prepared the Land for Energy Development report begun in 1983 by his Department and the Department of Energy.

Mr. Trippier: The steering group conducting the land for energy study was chaired by an official from my Department. Membership comprised of officials from my Department, the Department of Energy and MAFF. The following bodies were also represented:

British Gas Corporation
British Coal Corporation
CEGB
CBI
Yorkshire Water Authority (also representing Anglian and Severn Trent Water Authorities)
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Yorkshire and Humberside County Councils Association
Regional Planning Council for Yorkshire and Humberside
Derbyshire County Council
Nottinghamshire County Council

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times the working party preparing the report Land for Energy Development met; and what was the date upon which it last met.

Mr. Trippier: Work on the land for energy study began in April 1983 and seven full meetings of the steering group were held before the study was completed in January 1985. The date of the last meeting was 13 November 1984.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which responded to the requests for written submissions which were made by the working party preparing the report "Land for Energy Development" on behalf of his Department and the Department of Energy.

Mr. Trippier: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In July 1984 a copy of the draft report for the land for energy steering group was circulated to interested parties for comment. Of the 52 local authorities consulted, 36 responded.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the report "Land for Energy Development" begun in 1983 by his Department in conjunction with the Department of Energy.

Mr. Trippier: I am currently considering a number of representations from local authorities, the local authority associations and hon. Members requesting a meeting to discuss the report.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he received the finished report "Land for Energy Development".

Mr. Trippier: A final draft of the land for energy study was submitted to Ministers in the Departments of Energy and the Environment in February 1985.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action Her Majesty's Government are taking to promote international co-operation to protect the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has put forward suggestions to the Commission and EC member states on how the control measures of the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer might be implemented. In addition, we will be hosting a meeting in the United Kingdom early in 1988 to consider closer co-operation between EC and EFTA scientists on modelling and monitoring changes to stratospheric ozone.

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the current membership of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England and the changes that have been made in membership since 1983; and if he will make a statement with regard to his latest intentions on changing members of the commission.

Mr. Ridley: The current membership of the commission, showing date of first appointment, is:

	Year
Lord Montagu (Chairman)	October 1983
HRH Duke of Gloucester (Deputy Chairman)	October 1983
Lord Shelburne	October 1983
Mr. Anthony Emery	October 1983
Professor Rosemary Cramp	October 1983
Mr. Donald Insall	October 1983
Mr. Peter Burnham	December 1983
Mr. Jeremy Beecham	December 1983
Mr. Jeremy Benson	December 1983
Professor William Whitfield	March 1985
Mr. Simon Jenkins	March 1985
Mr. Robert Vigars	December 1985
Sir George Moseley	July 1986
Professor Barry Cunliffe	December 1986
Mr. John Newman	December 1986

Others who have served on the commission since its inception in 1983 are:

	Year
Dame Jennifer Jenkins	1983-85
Sir Arthur Drew	1983-86
Professor Colin Renfrew	1983-86
Mr. Howard Colvin	1983-85
Lord Camoys	1985-87

The terms of office of Mr. Peter Burnham, Mr. Jeremy Benson, Mr. Jeremy Beecham and Professor William Whitfield come to an end shortly. I am discussing possible successors with the chairman of the commission.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before Parliament the 1986-87 annual reports and statements of accounts of the residuary bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The 1986-87 annual reports and statements of accounts of the six metropolitan residuary bodies were laid before Parliament today. The accounts of the London residuary body are currently subject to the usual local government audit procedures and will be laid before Parliament as soon as the audit is complete.

These annual reports and accounts cover the residuary bodies' first full financial year. They point to the impressive progress made by the board members and staff in tackling the tasks inherited from the metropolitan county councils and in realising the benefits of abolition of an unnecessary tier of local government.

In the first year after abolition the metropolitan residuary bodies have reduced their full-time staff numbers from 1,224 at the beginning of the year to 1,017 at the end. These totals are continuing to fall as more of the residuary bodies' functions are discharged or transferred to successor bodies. The statements of accounts also show that substantial cash benefits have already been returned by the residuary bodies to district councils in their areas. In total, these amounted to some £70 million of which £24 million was capital receipts inherited from the county councils and generated from the disposal of surplus property.

The task faced by each residuary body in identifying and disposing of the many surplus properties accumulated by the county councils has not been an easy one and the reports show that all residuary bodies have made substantial progress in this area. The £11·5 million capital receipts already generated indicate the residuary bodies' commitment to ensuring that the value of these surplus assets is maximised and the benefits repatriated as quickly as possible to the ratepayers who paid for them.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the parcels of land vested by Order in Council in the London Docklands Development Corporation; and for each state the date of vesting, the area in hectares and acres, the previous owner, the principal purposes for which each is now in use; and, where this is housing, the approximate number of rented or owner-occupied dwellings.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply, 15 July 1987, c. 558*]: The details of the use of the land vested in the London Docklands Development Corporation by Orders in Council are as follows:

1: SI 1981/1146: LB Southwark land (vested 1 August 1981)

Plot	*Area*		*Principal purpose of use*	*If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes*
	hectares	*acres*		
1-9	2·1	5·2	Housing	44 homes for owner occupation 64 for rent
10	1·17	2·80	Housing	76 homes for owner occupation
13	0·25	0·61	Industrial	
11 12 15	1·78	4·4	Housing	44 homes for rent 94 for owner occupation
14	0·23	0·57	Housing	28 homes for sale
16	0·2	0·6	Housing	9 homes for rent
17 18	1·4	0·56	Housing	34 homes for rent 12 for sheltered housing
19	3·0	7·5	Retailing	
20	32·7	80·8	Housing and mixed uses	297 homes for owner occupation
21	1·74	4·3	Housing	111 homes
22	0·85	2·09	Housing	51 homes for sale
23 24 26	3·2	7·9	Housing	Not yet known
25	1·12	2·76	Housing	61 homes for sale
27	6·47	16·0	Housing	370 homes for sale
28	2·01	4·96	Housing	Homes for rent

2: SI 1983/514: GLC and Southwark land (vested 30 March 1983)

Plot	*Area*		*Principal purpose of use*	*If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes*
	hectares	*acres*		
1	54	133·5	Housing and industrial/ commercial	41 homes for rent 979 for sale 64 for shared ownership

3. SI 1981/942: GLC land (vested 2 July 1981)

Plot	Area		Principal purpose of use	If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes
	hectares	acres		
1	0·74	1·84	Stables	
2	0·81	2·00	Housing	Not completed
3	0·28	0·68	Housing	18 self built
4	2·30	5·68	Housing	171 units
5	0·15	0·38	Housing	Not completed
6, 7	0·43	1·08	Proposed housing and commercial	
8, 9, 10	0·47	1·17	Archaelogical site	
11	0·93	2·29	City Farm	

4. SI 1981/1719: GLC land (vested 27 November 1981)

Plot	Area		Principal purpose of use	If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes
	Hectares	Acres		
1	0·04	0·1	Offices	
2	0·12	0·3	Housing	228 units for sale (incomplete)
3	0·36	0·9	Housing	41 units
4	0·2	0·5	Not developed	
5	0·16	0·4	Not developed	
6	1·94	4·78	EZ5 Road Scheme, LEB Sub Station, proposed mix commercial-residential	
7	0·47	1·16	EZ5 western extension road	
8	4·6	11·35	Housing	380 for sale 171 for rent
9	1·8	4·45	Proposed for housing	Approximately 100 homes
10	1·2	3·0	Mudchute Station, Open Space	
11, 12, 13, 14	1·29	3·19	Proposed business units, Waste transfer station (plot 14)	
15	3·85	9·38	Housing	313 homes for owner occupation
16	0·25	0·63	School use	
17	1·62	4·0	Housing	100 homes for owner occupation

5. SI 1981/1145: LB Newham Land (vested 1 August 1981)

Plot	Area		Principal purpose of use	If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes
	hectares	acres		
1	8·1	20	Housing	225 homes for owner occupation 68 shared ownership
2	13·77	34	Housing	399 homes for owner occupation 122 for rent 34 for shared ownership
3	0·40	1·00	PLA	Not yet developed
4	12·55	31·00	GLC	Not yet developed
5	0·48	1·20	GLC	Not yet developed

6. S.I. 1981/1720: LB Tower Hamlets land (vested 27 November 1981)

Plot	Area		Principal purpose of use	If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes
	hectares	acres		
1.	14·58	36	Housing	991 units
2.	0·20	0·5	Housing	17 units
3.	0·36	0·9	Housing	207 units
4.	0·68	1·7	Housing	90 units (LB+H)
5.	0·23	0·7	Housing	80 units Housing Association
6.	0·20	0·5	Educational	—
7.	6.88	17.0	Housing	Total units 446
8.	2·45	6·05	Housing	150 owner occupied

7. SI 1981/941 Port of London Authority Land (vested 2 July 1987)

Plot	Area		Principal purpose of use	If housing, approximate number of rented/owner occupied homes
	hectares	acres		
1	21·50	53·11	Housing	32 Homes for shared ownership 116 for rent 762 for owner occupation
2	3·13	7·75	Allotments	
3	12·91	31·90	Housing	519 homes for owner occupation 226 for rent 15 for shared ownership
4	50.95	125·90	Mixed commercial and Industrial	
5	2· 2	5· 6	Allotments	
6	1·69	4·18	Not yet developed	
7	17·60	43·48	Mixed commercial	
8	2·34	5·79	Housing	72 Homes for owner occupation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Statistics

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of *(a)* pupils and *(b)* non-Protestant pupils at each of the 150 secondary schools designated as Protestant in the Department of Economic Developments publication "Classification of Schools for Monitoring Purposes".

Dr. Mawhinney: The total number of pupils enrolled in January 1987 at each of the secondary schools designated in the Department of Economic Development's publication as being attended mainly by Protestant pupils is shown in a table, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. (23 of the schools in the printed list no longer exist, but were included as their former pupils are still in the labour market.)

The Government do not collect statistics on the religious affiliation of individual pupils. It is not therefore possible to provide figures for the number of non-Protestant pupils at any school.

Divis Flats

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his timetable for the completion of the demolition and redevelopment of the Divis flats complex in Belfast.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Housing Executive. Its renewal strategy for Divis flats, which I accepted in 1986, provides for phased implementation over a period of seven to 10 years, subject to periodic review. A phased implementation is required in order, mainly, to meet tenants' preference to remain within their existing communities which cannot be fully met by the construction of new housing in an already heavily populated area.

Local Government

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from the Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland about the state of local government under its control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In common, I understand, with other Members of Parliament, I received a letter dated 30 October from the president of the Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland, expressing concern about the position of local government in Northern Ireland. The Government have told the association that we agree entirely that the presence in district council chambers in Northern Ireland of those who support terrorist violence while exploiting the democratic process poses serious problems. We recently published a discussion paper, "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland", as a basis for comment by interested parties. In the light of responses, the Government will decide what action to take.

Northern Ireland Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what remuneration the current chairman of the Northern Ireland Sports Council receives; and how many days per month he is expected to devote to the business of the Northern Ireland Sports Council.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of £3,115 per annum; there is no specified time commitment but, in practice, the current chairman devotes the equivalent of about six days per month to council business.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Dr. Mawhinney: Nine advertising agencies were engaged in handling a total of 22 campaigns on behalf of my Department during 1985-86; The agencies were:

Anderson Advertising Ltd
A V Browne Advertising Ltd
Davidson Pearce
Francis Killingbeck Bain
George Hynes & Partners Ltd
John Laird PR Ltd
McConnells Advertising Ltd
Naylor Hara International, Tokyo
Spring O'Brien Inc, New York

The campaigns and costs were as follows:

	£
Promotion of NI for Inward Investment in GB	117,900
Promotion of NI for Inward Investment in Europe	149,400
Promotion of IDB's services to local companies	205,300
Promotion of Belfast Enterprise Zone	20,000
Promotion of Londonderry Enterprise Zone	8,500
Youth Training Programme	313,000
Seven campaigns promoting Grants to Employer and Management Training	7,400
Job Market Services	32,500
Job Release Scheme	3,200
Energy Efficiency	153,400
Taxi Campaign	81,000
Road Safety (Drink, driving, seat belts)	309,800
Road Safety	10,900
Domestic Monergy Competition	38,200
Enterprise Zone Office	5,800
Prescriptions	16,000
DHSS Free Phone	20,000
Kidney Donor Card	6,900
Primary School Road Safety	51,200
Promotion of NI for Inward Investment in Japan	158,800
Promotion of NI for Inward Investment in North America	696,800
Confidential Telephone	73,300

North Downs and Ards Area Plan

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the public inquiry into the North Down and Ards area plan 1984 to 1995 will be able to consider the question of designating Strangford lough as an area of special scientific interest.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: This is a matter for the planning appeals commission to consider in the context of the public inquiry currently being held into objections to proposals contained in the North Down and Ards area plan 1984-1995.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has committed any public funds to the National Trust for the acquisition of land at Strangford lough after the decision to hold the public inquiry into the North Down and Ards area plan.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: The Department offered grant-aid to the National Trust to purchase lands at Greyabbey, Strangford lough on 27 July 1987. The decision to hold a public inquiry into the North Down and Ards area plan 1984-1995 was announced on 16 September 1987.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: Domestic accommodation is provided for some civil servants on detached duty in Northern Ireland and for Ministers and senior officials, in lieu of detached duty and subsistence allowances. The cost of this accommodation is not available separately and can only be extracted at disproportionate cost.

Family Income Supplement

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of people in Northern Ireland and the number of dependants covered thereby claiming family income supplement in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of families receiving FIS*	*Number of child dependants*
1979 (December)	7,899	27,479
1987 (May)	14,890	40,973

Social Security Reform

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received on the reformed structure of income-related benefits; and if he will list them.

Mr. Needham: A comprehensive list of representations is not available but comments on the reformed structure have been received from a number of Members of Parliament and some of the political parties, district councils and voluntary bodies in Northern Ireland.

Supplementary Benefits

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of people in Northern Ireland and the number of dependants covered thereby claiming supplementary benefit in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	November 1979	*February 1986*
Supplementary benefit claimants	115,359	184,374
Dependent partners and children	91,116	188,056

Source: Annual survey—5 per cent. sample.

Housing Benefit

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of people in Northern Ireland and the number of dependants covered thereby claiming housing benefit in 1979 and the latest available date; and if he will distinguish whether these payments are made for tenants in the public sector, the private sector, or for payment with rates.

Mr. Needham: The available information is as follows:

	[1]*1979*	*1987*
Public sector tenants	21,000	118,100
Private sector tenants	1,600	20,700
Owner-occupiers	34,800	54,000
	57,400	192,800

[1]Prior to 21.11.83, when housing benefit was introduced, rent rebates, rate rebates and rent allowances were generally available only to householders not receiving supplemetary benefit.
Note.—Figures are rounded.

Nirex

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what approach has been to his Department by United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. regarding the

ue of sites in Northern Ireland for storage of nuclear waste; and whether he has had any representations regarding the construction of an offshore repository for nuclear waste in the Irish sea.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 20 November 1987]:* No approach has been made by UK Nirex Ltd. regarding the use of any sites in Northern Ireland for the storage of nuclear waste, and neither have any representations been received about the construction of an offshore repository for nuclear waste in the Irish sea.

SOCIAL SERVICES

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the survivability of the AIDS virus in water.

Mr. Newton: I am not aware of any specific published data on the survival of the AIDS virus (HIV) in water.

I am, however, advised that raw water is not a favourable medium, and that environmental factors, biodegradation and dilution would make it most unlikely that the virus would survive.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the wider use within the National Health Service of family practitioners committees' patient registration data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The basic information people provide when they register with a doctor—name, address, age and sex—gives family practitioner committees the most comprehensive and up-to-date record of the population within their area. Many health authorities would like to make use of this information as a basis for developing a community index which they believe would greatly assist them, especially in planning programmes for health screening and the prevention of illness.

There is, of course, no question of passing clinical information about an individual from one authority to another. Nevertheless, some doubts have been expressed about whether it would be proper to make available in the way proposed even such basic "age-sex register" data. We think therefore that it is right to promote wider public discussion before reaching a conclusion. Accordingly, we have today published a consultation document on the matter, seeking views by the end of February 1988.

Low-paid Families

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for the numbers of lower-paid families with and without children, whose marginal tax rates including benefit withdrawal will be *(a)* 90 to 100 per cent., *(b)* 80 to 90 per cent., *(c)* 70 to 80 per cent., *(d)* 60 to 70 per cent., *(e)* 50 to 60 per cent. and *(f)* 40 to 50 per cent. after the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 in April 1988, assuming that in 1988-89 personal tax allowances are raised in my line with inflation and the basic rate of tax is reduced to 25 per cent.

Mr. Scott: The main assumptions underlying the figures given in the table are, with the exception of a 25 per cent. basic rate of tax, the same as those mentioned in reply to my hon. Friend on 19 November. Since the estimates assume that employees' national insurance contributions are paid at 9 per cent., the figures include some overstatement and can indicate only broad orders of magnitude:

Total marginal rate of deduction (per cent.) per £1 of extra gross earnings

Thousands—Great Britain

	Families with children	*Couples and single people without children*
Above 90	60	10
80 but less than 90	350	10
70 but less than 80	80	20
60 but less than 70	[1]	0
50 but less than 60	0	0
40 but less than 50	[2]	[2]

Notes:

1. Main assumptions as in "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" published 27 October, except that standard of tax rate is assumed to be 25 per cent.
2. Heads of tax-units only.

[1] Means less than 5,000.

[2] Means not readily available.

Salazopyrin

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reports his Department has received in each of the last three years in respect of alleged instances of trading in unlicensed supplies of the medicine Salazopyrin from *(a)* Italy and *(b)* any other European country; and if he will give the dates these reports were received.

Mr. Newton: No cases currently under investigation arise from reports of unlicensed supplies of Salazopyrin. I regret that information about earlier cases is not readily available.

Social Fund

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated amount of the social fund for the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Scott: The areas served by individual local offices are not necessarily conterminous with the boundaries of local authorities. The London borough of Lambeth is served by the 10 local offices listed; information on their social fund budget allocations for 1988-89 was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81.*

Geographical percentage of the area of the London Borough of Lambeth falling within local office boundaries

Office	*Per cent.*
Balham ILO	16
Battersea ILO	16
Brixton ILO	14
Camberwell AO	1
Crystal Palace ILO	1
Kennington Park ILO	3
Oval AO	15
Peckham AO	6
Southwark ILO	6
Streatham ILO	22

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people and the number of dependents covered thereby claiming family income supplement in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The number of people in families receiving family income supplement at April 1979 and April 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) is as follows.

	April 1979	*April 1986*
Number of families claiming and receiving family income supplement	77,000	200,000
Number of dependents in families receiving family income supplement (includes partners and children)	214,000	530,000
Total number of people in families receiving family income supplement	291,000	730,000

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people and the number of dependants covered thereby claiming supplementary benefit in 1979 and the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows:

Thousands

	November 1979	*May 1987*
Number of claimants	2,855	4,860
Number of partners	561	1,063
Number of dependants under 19	955	2,240
Total dependent on supplementary benefit	4,370	8,164

Note: The figures for November 1979 are derived from the annual statistical inquiry. The figures for May 1987, which are the latest available and are provisional, are derived from the quarterly statistical inquiry. The two sets of figures are therefore not strictly comparable.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the number of people over the past 10 years who have been disqualified from unemployment benefit for leaving their job without good cause or for misconduct; and if he will give the number of claimants in each of these years appealing against the decision and the number and percentage of such claimants successful in getting the original decision overturned.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of people disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit under section 20(1)*(a)* of the Social Security Act 1975 (dismissal for misconduct or voluntary leaving without just cause) are shown in the following table:

	Leaving Voluntarily	*Misconduct*
1977	429,356	138,944
1978	441,281	129,996
1979	409,498	120,819
1980	344,403	133,669
1981	241,074	102,196
1982	251,280	95,323
1983	257,289	93,656
1984	276,235	93,570
1985	295,041	97,992
1986	310,976	98,938
1987	143,895	48,906

Notes:

1. Figures for 1984 have not previously been available but have now been clerically assembled.
2. The 1987 figures are for January-June inclusive.

Prior to 1984, no statistics were kept on the number of appeals made against these disqualifications, and I regret that most figures thereafter could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the following figures are available from a separate special exercise for the period 1 January to 31 March 1987.

	Appeals Heard and Decided	*Appellant Successful*
Leaving voluntarily	1,002	426 (42·5 per cent.)
Misconduct	471	259 (55 per cent.)

Benefits (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total sums spent on single payments in each Newcastle upon Tyne benefit office in each financial year from 1983-84, and for April to October of the current year.

Mr. Portillo: The information asked for is given in the table.

Financial year	*Newcastle St. James* £	*Newcastle East* £	*Newcastle West* £
1983-84	547,038	611,715	435,168
1984-85	1,124,304	929,613	765,433
1985-86	1,676,217	1,294,376	1,302,092
1986-87	1,388,339	957,691	1,073,838
1987[1]	405,227	257,765	346,459

[1] 8 April 1987 to 20 October 1987.

Note: The information for 1986-87 and for April to October 1987 is provisional and subject to amendment.

Prescriptions

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to halt the fraudulent use of National Health Service prescriptions by some general practitioners and chemists for procuring medicines for use overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for family practitioner committees in the first instance to investigate allegations of fraud in respect of contractors with whom they are in contract to provide services under the National Health Service, and to take any necessary action including referring the matter to the police, if appropriate. We are drawing the attention of the relevant family practitioner committees to the allegations made in a recent press article.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list details of each change to the

housing benefit system since the scheme was announced; and if he will detail the date these changes took effect and the savings to public expenditure of each of these reforms.

Mr. Portillo: Significant changes to the housing benefit scheme were as follows:

April 1983

Rent taper above needs allowance increased from 17 per cent. to 21 per cent.

Rates taper above needs allowance increased from 6 per cent. to 7 per cent.

April 1984

Rent taper above needs allowance increased from 21 per cent. to 26 per cent.

Rates taper above needs allowance increased from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent.

18 to 20-year-old non-dependent deductions incorporated into the adult rate. Deductions for 18 to 20-year-olds on supplementary benefit or youth training schemes abolished.

November 1984

Rent taper above needs allowance increased from 26 per cent. to 29 per cent.

Minimum payments above needs allowance increased to 50 pence.

Non-dependant deductions for 16 to 17-year-olds not on supplementary benefit, youth training schemes or non-contributory invalidity pension introduced at the lower rate.

50 pence real improvement to dependent child's needs allowance.

April 1985

High rent scheme thresholds raised to 130 per cent. of average rents.

November 1985

Rate taper above needs allowance increased from 9 per cent. to 13 per cent.

95 pence real improvement to dependent child's needs allowance.

July 1986

Age at which deductions made in respect of non-dependents receiving supplementary benefit increased from 21 to 25, in new and repeat claims only.

April 1987

Rent taper above needs allowance increased from 29 per cent. to 33 per cent.

Needs allowances increased in line with cash increase in basic retirement pensions instead of using traditional formula.

The table shows the expenditure effects of these measures.

Estimated cash savings from main changes to the housing benefit scheme

Date of change	[1]*Amount saved (£ million)*
April 1983	(approx) 50
April and November 1984	[2]171
April 1985	6
November 1985	[3]57
July 1986	26
April 1987	68

[1] All savings are shown in terms of the full-year effects and include savings in rate rebate expenditure, which is not formally classified as public expenditure. The savings for different years cannot be aggregated over a period because the effects of the changes overlap and are partly offset by other factors.

[2] This figure is the estimated full-year cost in November 1984 of restoring the November 1983 tapers, minima, and equivalent levels for non-dependent deductions and the dependent child's needs allowance.

[3] This figure was offset by extra expenditure of £12 million resulting from the real increase in the childs' needs allowance (net saving £45 million)

Diabetics

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated total annual cost of making blood sugar strips for diabetics available through the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 24 November.

Family Practitioner Services

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost of family practitioner services in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: Gross expenditure on the family practitioner services in England, excluding the cost of administration, was £3,345 million and £3,524 million in 1984-85 and 1985-86 respectively.

Social Workers

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking in relation to the power of local authorities to charge health authorities for the services of hospital social workers.

Mr. Newton: We intend to give statutory support to the 1974 arrangements under which it was agreed that health authorities and local authorities would not charge each other for certain services, and in particular that local authorities would not charge health authorities for the provision of social work in hospitals. This 1974 arrangement was reflected in the provision of funds to health authorities and local authorities. However, no action was taken to remove the legal power for local authorities to charge for them.

In the light of the decision by the London borough of Camden to use this power to charge the Bloomsbury health authority for hospital social work, despite the 1974 agreement, we have decided that it would be right to amend the law. Accordingly clause 15 of the Health and Medicines Bill, published today, provides for the abolition of the charging power. Subject to the agreement of Parliament, this change would have effect from midnight tonight.

While the Government believe it is unacceptable that health authorities should be exposed to bills in respect of these services, we recognise that some local authorities face particular problems arising from the number of patients who come to teaching and specialist hospitals within their area but who are not resident in it. We shall continue to work for a solution to these problems, which in our view can most appropriately be achieved by arrangements for sharing the costs more equitably between local authorities.

General Practice Finance Corporation

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of the General Practice Finance Corporation.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), published today, announces the Government's plans to seek powers to change the constitution of the General Practice Finance Corporation (GPFC) to allow maximum use of private sector funds. It is proposed that the corporation should become a

statutory company under the Companies Act and that there should be a trust to represent the profession on the board of directors of the new corporation. We shall be carrying forward this proposal in further discussion with the GPFC and the General Medical Services Committee (GMSC) of the British Medical Association. Powers to enable such a change to take place are included in clauses 1 to 3 of the Health and Medicines Bill, published today.

In the meantime, we have increased the corporation's permitted borrowing of £8 million to £10 million in 1988-89. In consequence, the corporation has resumed lending for family doctors' surgery premises.

Poverty and Unemployment

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will update the information given in the first paragraph of the section on poverty and unemployment traps which appears on page 94 of the current issue of "Social Trends", taking into account changes in housing benefit, and the transition from supplementary benefit to income support in April 1988, but assuming that income tax and national insurance remain at current levels;

(2) if he will update the information given in the second paragraph of the section on poverty and unemployment traps which appears on page 94 of the current issue of "Social Trends", assuming that a married couple with four children will be faced with social security changes in April 1988, but that there will be no change in the level of national insurance contributions or income tax.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 23 November 1987]*: In the most extreme case of the poverty trap, as specified, an extra £1 of gross earnings could lead to an increase in income tax of 27p, a 9p increase in national insurance contributions, a 45p reduction in family credit and a 16p reduction in housing benefit—a total of 97p. In April 1987 the corresponding figure was £1·09.

After the addition of benefits, the net income of a hypothetical married couple with four dependent children (aged 3, 8, 11 and 16), and paying average rent and rates, would be £122·72 at gross earnings of £75. This figure would rise to £138·69 at gross earnings of £160. Prior to the reform of the social security system, net income would have remained below £122·72 as gross earnings rose above £75.

The figures given combine various assumptions from the April 1987 tax benefit model tables and the April 1988 social security benefit rates. The position would differ on different assumptions.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure so far in the current year by the Health Education Authority relating to *(a)* AIDS, *(b)* smoking and *(c)* alcohol.

Mr. Newton: Specific expenditure so far has been as follows:

	£
Alcohol	144,767
Smoking	45,414
AIDS	33,722

As the hon. Member will be aware, the Health Education Authority did not assume responsibility for the Government's AIDS public education campaign until October 1987.

AIDS, smoking and alcohol also constitute substantial elements of other authority programmes, such as the family and personal health programme, young people's programme, adult and community education programme. The Department of Health and Social Security/Health Education Authority "Look After Your Heart" campaign, which highlights smoking and alcohol abuse as two of the main risk factors of coronary heart disease, is spending £2·5 million in 1987-88.

The authority's projected expenditure for the remainder of the current financial year is:

	£
Alcohol	368,464
Smoking	1,052,457
AIDS	4,100,000

Heating Additions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many supplementary benefit claimants on the long-term rate of benefit were receiving heating additions at *(a)* the higher and *(b)* the lower rate on 30 September 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987; what percentages of the total numbers of claimants on the long-term rate were receiving each type of addition on that date; and what were these figures and percentages for each office of his Department within Newcastle-upon-Tyne;

(2) how many supplementary benefit claimants were receiving heating additions at *(a)* the higher and *(b)* the lower rate on 30 September 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987; what percentages of the total numbers of supplementary benefit claimants were receiving each type of addition on that date; and if he will give these figures and percentages for each office of his Department within Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply] 4 November 1987, c. 783-84]*: The information requested about the number and percentage of supplementary benefit claimants in Great Britain receiving heating additions in December 1984 and February 1986 is as follows:

	1984	*1986*
I. *Claimants on the long term rate of benefit*		
Nos (000s) with higher rate addition[1]	759·0	821·0
Nos (000s) with lower rate addition[2]	1,244·0	1,279·0
Percentage of those on long-term rate with higher rate addition	31·5	32·0
Percentage of those on long-term rate with lower rate addition	51·5	50·5
II. *All Claimants*		
Nos (000s) with higher rate addition[1]	1,117·0	1,010·0
Nos (000s) with lower rate addition[2]	1,706·0	1,819·0
Percentage with higher rate addition	24·2	22·1
Percentage with lower rate addition	37·0	36·8

Source: 1984 and 1986 Annual Statistical Enquiry.

[1] Numbers include all those receiving central heating and estate rate heating additions at higher rate.

[2] Numbers include all those receiving central heating and estate rate heating additions at lower rate and also unspecified heating additions.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 26 November 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

News International

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Attorney-General what is his latest information as to the cost to public funds of the cases brought against certain local authorities resulting from their failure to place in public libraries News International publications; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my predecessor gave to him on 12 March at columns *251-52*. The position remains unchanged.

Dowty Rotol

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General why Dowty Rotol was not prosecuted for fraud, in the light of that company's overcharging on Ministry of Defence contract work.

The Attorney-General: A report was submitted by the Ministry of Defence police in August 1985 to the Director of Public Prosecutions. After careful consideration he decided that there was insufficient evidence against any of the persons named in that report to justify the institution of criminal proceedings.

TRANSPORT

Road Improvements (Sheffield-Manchester)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will take to improve road communications between Sheffield and Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A616/A628 trunk route between Sheffield and Manchester is currently being improved over 7·5 miles between Stocksbridge and the M1. This scheme is due for completion in Spring 1988.

Local improvements are also being considered taking account of the special environmental considerations.

Driving Schools

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints his Department has received concerning the nuisance to residents from driving schools and examiners using residential areas (*a*) for practice or tests and (*b*) for reversing practice.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

All driving test centres use a variety of approved test routes. Examiners seek to spread testing to minimise nuisance and inconvenience to local residents.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representations from passengers' representative bodies concerning services on the Dartford or Bexleyheath lines of Network SouthEast.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has received no such representation recently. The MMC's report on Network SouthEast published in September does, however, draw attention to the need for improvements on these lines, and I am discussing with British Rail what needs to be done.

British Rail

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce plans for the complete privatisation of British Rail catering.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Railways Board is extending the role of the private sector in all aspects of railway catering, but it has not brought forward any proposals for complete privatisation.

Carlisle-Settle Railway Line

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what factors are delaying his decision on the future of the Carlisle to Settle railway line; when the matter first came to his Department for decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I received the board's financial case last December. Since then I have had to consider many representations, some of them quite recent, that have been made to me about that financial case, including comprehensive statements from both the local authorities, and the Friends of the Line.

London Underground (Accidents)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, he will now place in the Library details of all prescribed and reported accidents respectively, that have occurred on lines of London Underground Ltd. since 1 January 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have placed in the Library a list of those accidents since 1 January 1986 which have occurred on the London Underground and which are required to be reported under the provisions of the Railways (Notice of Accidents) Order 1986, SI 1986 No. 2187.

Leisure Traffic

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has completed his review of road scheme assessment criteria to ensure that appropriate weight is given to leisure traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The result of the review is contained in a report "Tourism, Leisure and Roads" published on 15 October. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The main conclusion to emerge is that the assessment framework approach adopted on motorway and other

trunk road improvement schemes brings together, in a comprehensive fashion, all the matters relevant in reaching decisions on these schemes. These include the special characteristics relating to the tourism and leisure industry. Recent increases in the value of leisure time will improve the case for schemes which serve tourist and leisure traffic.

The tourism industry can and should press its case for improvements in trunk and other roads by participating activity in the public consultation procedures included in the road planning process.

Roads

Mr. Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the efficiency scrutiny of the management of property purchased by his Department for road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The scrutiny was completed early in November. I have placed copies of the examining officer's report in the Library. The report recommends measures to limit the amount of property held, to improve its management while held, to facilitate disposal when it is found to be surplus and to optimise price on disposal. Some of the recommendations are already being implemented; the others are being given immediate attention.

Road Haulage Permits

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has determined the fees to be charged to United Kingdom hauliers for international road haulage permits in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, The fees for 1988 permits are to be reduced.

This is possible because of successful bilateral negotiations with other countries by Department of Transport officials.

Significant increases in the United Kingdom's quotas have meant greater income from permits without a significant increase in cost.

United Kingdom hauliers will benefit from the Department's success: first, in having more permits available and, secondly, from reduced fees.

The fees will be as follows, with the 1987 charges in brackets:

	£	
Single journey permit	2	(£2.80)
Multi-journey permit	1 per journey	(£1.70)
Annual period permit	50	(no change)
3-month period permit	14	(no change)
Multilateral EC/ECMT annual permit	100	(£105)
Multilateral EC/ECMT 3 months permit	26	(£27)

The Government will continue to make representations to the European Community for the early removal of all permits and other restrictive trade practices concerning international transport.

King's Cross (Fire)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will contribute to the disaster fund set up by the London borough of Camden for the victims of the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Channon: The Government will be making a contribution of £250,000 to the King's Cross disaster fund. I hope that the Government's example will encourage others to join in helping the bereaved and those who suffered in this dreadful accident. Neither the fund nor my donation to it will affect claims for compensation.

Parliamentary approval for this payment will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the Transport Services and Central Administration Vote. Pending that approval, the £250,000 donation will be met by an advance from the Contingencies Fund. As savings have occurred in class VIII, vote 2, there will be no increase in the public expenditure planning total.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner Cities (Insurance)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about initiatives his Department is taking with respect to insurance in the inner cities.

Mr. Atkins: This Department has a particular responsibility for insurance matters in the inner cities.

We recognise that the availability of insurance cover can pose difficulties for businesses in inner-city areas and a procedure was agreed with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) in October 1986 to help overcome these problems. These arrangements are working well and the local authorities in Lambeth, Leeds and Manchester are now associated with them.

In addition, the ABI has now launched a series of advice files on small business insurance, one of which deals with inner-city business insurance. The ABI is also proposing to set up two pilot insurance advice centres in Birmingham and Manchester to provide essential information to small businesses. The Government's city action teams in those cities are assisting with premises. This marks a further stage in the close co-ordination of effort between the Government and the association, which can only help the inner-city business community.

European Space Agency

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what way Her Majesty's Government have withdrawn from, or come to disagree with, the guidance and the objectives for the European Space Agency agreed by the United Kingdom and all other members unanimously in resolution 1 on 31 January 1985 in Rome.

Mr. Butcher: At Rome the United Kingdom was prepared to back a well-balanced ESA programme. At The Hague we were faced with an unbalanced programme, including a very expensive Hermes proposal not accepted at Rome, and a real risk that user programmes, which have always been our major interest, would suffer.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations were undertaken with British Aerospace and those other British companies co-operating with the European Space Agency prior to Her Majesty's Government's decision on their contribution to the agency announced at The Hague; and what consultation and advice Her Majesty's Government have provided since that announcement to these companies.

Mr. Butcher: Prior to the ministerial meeting at The Hague, the British national space centre was in regular contact with British Aerospace and other United Kingdom companies primarily involved in European Space Agency activities. Since the meeting these companies have been debriefed on the outcome, and, in consultation with industry, we shall shortly be taking a fresh look at United Kingdom civil space activities, both nationally and in ESA.

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what financial contribution Her Majesty's Government are intending to make to the European Space Agency for the total of its future activities; and what has been the amount and proportion paid by Her Majesty's Government in each of the last four years;

(2) what information he has as to the proportion of the total cost of the future activities of the European Space Agency to be met by Her Majesty's Government in future, and as to the amount and the proportion of the total European Space Agency expenditure paid by Her Majesty's Government in 1986.

Mr. Butcher: The United Kingdom's contributions to the European Space Agency from 1983-1986 have been as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom contribution				
Million ecu	110·7	122·2	124·0	125·5
Million pounds	61·6	70·4	73·5	71·8
Total members' contributions				
Million ecu	683·0	765·2	859·9	957·8
Million pounds	380·1	440·7	509·5	548·1
United Kingdom contributions as percentage of total members' contributions	16·2	16·0	14·4	13·1
Total ESA expenditure (including other income)				
Million ecu	697·9	927·8	923·8	1,067·3
Million pounds	388·3	534·3	547·4	610·8
United Kingdom contributions as percentage of total expenditure	15·9	13·2	13·4	11·8

For future years, our contributions to the ESA mandatory programmes (the general budget and the science programme) will be at a level based on relative GNP, which is fixed at 16·51 per cent. for 1988. Our overall level of contributions will depend on the levels at which we choose to subscribe to future optional programmes. (If we maintain our overall contribution to ESA at around its current level, and if other member states go ahead with the agency's current proposals, the United Kingdom's share of total expenditure will decline to around 5 per cent. by 1992).

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what future benefits in detail Her Majesty's Government envisage will now come to the United Kingdom from the work of the European Space Agency.

Mr. Butcher: We shall continue to play our part in the mandatory programmes which will benefit both our space science community and industry, through the technology programme of the general budget. On the optional programmes, as in the past we shall continue to be selective and look for industrial, technological and commercial benefits to the United Kingdom. Consequently, I shall be discussing with industry the United Kingdom's interest not only in the Columbus and Ariane V programmes, which were discussed at The Hague, but in the future communication and earth observation programmes of ESA.

European Space Centre

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what projects projected for the future by the European space centre Her Majesty's Government consider British industry should co-operate with and help finance, either individually or in alliance with other British or foreign organisations.

Mr. Butcher: Arrangements will be made soon for Government and industry to take a fresh look at United Kingdom civil space activities, both nationally and in ESA. If well-judged projects of proven commercial, industrial and scientific value are put forward, we will consider them alongside other scientific and commercial opportunities.

We will be looking to the private sector to play an increasingly important part in the direction and funding of future programmes.

Steel Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to publish its report on the steel industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State expects to publish this report in the new year. The long delay in publication has been caused by the need to consider very carefully a request by the British Steel Corporation that the Secretary of State should exercise his powers under section 17 of the Competition Act 1980 to make a number of excisions to the published report.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the European regional development fund was received by Scotland in the last yearly allocation.

Mr. Atkins: Scotland received commitments totalling £84 million from the European regional development fund in 1986. This represents approximately 21 per cent. of the ERDF allocation to the United Kingdom as a whole, and over 3 per cent. of all commitments made by the fund in that year.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which projects submitted from Scotland were *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected by the European Commission for European regional development fund assistance in the last yearly allocation.

Mr. Atkins: I attach a list of all projects submitted from Scotland for consideration by the European Commission for European regional development fund assistance in 1986.

The list separately identifies those projects which were *(a)* accepted for ERDF awards, and *(b)* withdrawn.

SCOTLAND
Industrial projects which received awards in 1986

Firm	*Location*	*Project*
Ireland Alloys Ltd.	Hamilton	Scrap Metal Recycling
Avery Label System Ltd.	Cumbernauld	Self Adhesive Label/Machine
Atlas Hydraulic Loaders Ltd.	Blackwood/Clydesdale	Hydraulic Cranes
G. L. Rexroth (SC) Ltd.	Kirkcaldy	Hydraulic Motor/Valves
James Paton Ltd.	Paisley	Weekly Newspapers
Bourns Electronics Ltd.	Dunfermline	Electronic Components
Alex Pettigrew Ltd.	Coatbridge	Business Forms
Dayco Rubber (UK) Ltd.	Dundee	Synthetic Rubber Accessor
W. L. Gore Assoc. Ltd.	Dundee	Micro Coax Cables
W. L. Gore Assoc. Ltd.	Dundee	Plastic Coatings
Digital Equipment (Scot) Ltd.	South Queensferry	Computers & Assoc. Periph
Beechams Pharmaceuticals	Irvine Ayrshire	Pharmaceuticals
McKellar Matt Ltd.	Glasgow	Frozen Products
Low and Bonar plc.	Dundee	Textile Materials
CPC UK Ltd.	Paisley	Food Products
Beckman Ltd.	Glenrothes	Diagnostic Systems
Fabri-Tek Computer Components	High Blantyre	Electronic Components
Weir Pumps	Alloa	Pump Testing

Infrastructure projects which received awards in 1986

Location	*Project*
Newton Stewart Wigtown	Workshop Units
West Calder West Lothian	Workshop Units
Whitburn	Workshop Units
Dumbarton	Workshop Units
Coatbridge	Workshop Units
Ross & Cromarty	Workshop Units at Alness I.E.
Skye & Lochalsh	Workshop Units at Broadford I
Sutherland	Workshop Units at Kinlochbervi
Inverness	Workshop Units at Smithson I.E
Cardenden	Workshop Units
Stirling	Workshop Units
New Lanark	Interpretive Centre
Stevenston	Wet Weather Leisure Facilities
Coatbridge	Industrial Heritage Park
Coatbridge	Industrial Heritage Park
Hamilton	Chatelherault Country Park
Hamilton	Chatelherault Country Park
Irvine	Site Servicing Old Hall West
Mauchlene	Workshop Units
Patna	Site Servicing Waterside I.E.
Patna	Site Servicing Waterside I.E.
Patna	Site Servicing Doonview I.E.
Patna	Site Servicing Doonview I.E.
Kyle of Lochalsh	Workshop Units
Blar Mhor/Lochabar	Workshop Units
Glac Mhor/Sutherland	Workshop Units
Alness	Workshop Units
Kinlochbervie	Extension of Water Supplies
Thurso	Improvements Drainage System
Kiltarlity	Sewage Treatment Plant
Kirkhill	Sewage Treatment Plant
Fort Augustus	Sewage Treatment Plant
Inverness	Road Improvements
Sunnyside	Road Improvements
Reiss	Road Improvements
Wick	Road Improvements
Dundee	Kingsway West Sewer Phase 3
Arbroath	Flood Prevention Works
Dundee	Industrial Site Development
Dundee	New Pumphouse/Main Sewer
Pitkerro I.E.	Improvements to Drainage
Dundee	Tay Road Bridge Gantries
Glenrothes	Electricity Supply Cables
Central Region	Improve Water Mains
Alloa	Workshop Units Claremont I.E.
Grangemouth	Workshop Units Abbotsinch I.E.
Kirkcaldy	Windygates Bypass
Stirling	Carron Valley Reservoir
Ardrishaig	Improve Canal Bridge on A83
Achlett Corner	Improvements to A83
Braes O Yetts	Improvements to B8048
Kirkintilloch	Advance Works Town Relief Road
Torrance	Improve Torrance Bridge on A807
Bearsden	Improve Canniesburn Toll Junction
Ayr	Improvement to the Beeches on A70
Greenock	Refuse Disposal Facility
Gourock	Refuse Disposal Facility
Queendale/Dunrosness	Restoration Water Powered Mill
Burravoe/Yell	Visitors Centre
Dalgety Bay	Site Services Donisbristle I.E.
Dunfermline	Site Services Pitreavie I.E.
Dunfermline	Pitreavie Trunk Sewer
Cowdenbeath	Sewage Disposal Works Phase 1 and 2
Kirkcaldy	Water Augmentation
Kinghorn	Site Services and Workshop Units
Glenrothes	Extension Detroit Road
Glenrothes	Taxiway Phase at Airfield I.E.

Location	Project
Glenrothes	Improvement Woll Mill Road
Livingston	Site Services at Deans I.E.
Livingston	Site Services at Kirkton
Livingston	Site Services at Brucefield
Livingston	Site Preparation Eliburn West
Livingston	Site Services Almondvale
West Calder	Access Lane/West Calder Workspace
Livingston	Cousland Toll Roundabout
Mid Calder	Calder Park Distributor Road
West Lothian	Study Starlaw Junction Leis. Dev.
Cumbernauld	Eastfield Road Phase 3
Cumbernauld	Workshop Units Lenziemill I.E.
Dundee	Marine Facility
Johnston	Johnston Bypass
Motherwell	Access Road/Site Servicing
Johnstone	Workshop Units
Milngavie	Auchenhowie Road
Invershin	East West Link Road
Fortrose	Safe Access at Ness Road
Lairg	New Bridge
Spittal	Waste Disposal Facilities
Newtonmore	Ralia Gateway Info Centre
Argyll and Bute	Ferry Ness Loch Ranza-Claonaig
Tiree	Road Network
Islay	Road Improvement at Bowmore
Carradale	Reinforced Concrete Sea Wall
Carrick Castle	C6 Lettermay Bridge
Lorn	Loch Avich Bridge
Kintyre	Improvement to A83 Road
Rothesay	Site Servicing
Lorn	Improvements A37 Road
Dundee	Rapid Gravity Filtration Plant
Cowbridge	Coatbridge Sewer
Mosend/Motherwell	Roundabout at Calder Road
Moteiesburn	Site Service at Bridgend I.E.
Iverkirkaig	Iverkirkaig Bridge
Corran Ferry	Corran Ferry Berthing Structure
Laxford Bridge	Reconstruction of A838 Laxford Bridge
Inverness	Improvement Longman Drive Phase 2
Muir of Ord	Improvement A832 Road
Freswick	Improvement A9 South of Freswick
Grangemouth	Site Service—Abbotsinch Industrial Estate
Falkirk	Improvement Falkirk Sewer Phase 1
Cumberland	Improvement Cumbernauld Airfield
Kirkintylock	New Construction A803 Netherinck Bridge
Thornliebank	Improvement A726/B769 Spierbridge J
Dunfermline	Improvement Moodie St/Priory Lane
Dunfermline	Improvement Junction on Carnegie Drive
Dunfermline	Realignment of Whitfield Road
Kirkcaldy	Improvement A921 Portbrae
Lochgelly	New Construction Lochgelly Link Road
Dunfermline	A910 Lisa Brae/B921 Woodend F
Saline	West Fife West Main Reinforce Phase 3
Alexandra	Bridge Across River Leven-Bonhill
Tayside	National Programme of Community Interest
Glenrothes	Improvement Stenton Roundabout
Moyness Bridge	New Costruction—Moyness Bridge

Projects withdrawn

Central Regional Council	
Bonnybridge Falkirk	Workshop Units
Central Region	Telemetry Schemes
Central Region	Waste Detection Scheme
Alloa	Workshop Units Castle St. I.E.
Falkirk	Workshop Units Bankside I.E
Falkirk	Workshop Units Tamfourhill I.E.
Denny	Workshop Units Winchester Avenue
Central Region	Workshop Units
Fife Regional Council	
Kirkcaldy	Urban Roads in Kirkcaldy District
Highland Regional Council	
Caithness	Workshop Units at Wick I.E
Balmakeith/Nairn	Workshop Units
Lothian Regional Council	
Bathgate	Workshop Units
Livingston	Cousland Road Footbridge
Strathclyde Regional Council	
Glasgow	Workshop Units
Paisley	Workshop Units
Alexandria	Workshop Units
Kilmarnock	Workshop Units
Ardrossan	Workshop Units
Barrhead	Workshop Units
Blantyre	Workshop Units
Port Appin/Lishore	Store/Waiting Room Facilities
Tarbert	Junction Improvement on A83
Tayside Regional Council	
Dundee	Improvements to Road Depot
Shetland Isles Islands Council	
Shetland	Future Oil Prospects
Cunningham District Council	
Saltcoats	Environmental Improvements
Irvine	Improvement at Magnum Centre
Monklands District Council	
Coatbridge	Workshop Units
Dundee District Council	
Dundee	Workshop Units
British Rail	
Courock	Track Rationalisation/signals
Inverness	Rolling Stock Depot
Glasgow/Oban/Mallaig	Electronic Signalling
Clyde Port Authority	
Greenock	Improvements to cranes
Greenock	Straudle Carriers at Terminal

Central America (Trade)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the value of export trade with *(a)* Nicaragua, *(b)* Honduras, *(c)* Guatemala, *(d)* Costa Rica, *(e)* El Salvador and *(f)* Panama in each of the past three completed accounting years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

TRADE STATISTICS: 1984-1986

Value: £000s

	EXPORTS			*IMPORTS*		
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Nicaragua	4,755	6,368	7,349	2,176	1,324	1,30
Honduras	7,381	9,025	9,213	12,360	11,138	5,28
Guatemala	10,659	13,457	9,288	9,564	5,176	8,09
Costa Rica	9,138	14,412	12,007	21,234	22,646	30,31
El Salvador	7,589	8,507	6,917	2,550	1,661	1,32
Panama*	74,343	55,423	44,975	9,680	14,555	4,95

Notes: 1. Figures for 1986 provisional
2. Exports fob; Imports cif.
Source: *Overseas Trade Statistics*

PRIME MINISTER

Crewe

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Crewe.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Sandwell

Mr. Archer: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the metropolitan borough of Sandwell.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Computer Purchases

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister at what price threshold the purchase of computer equipment for a Government Department becomes subject to collective ministerial consideration; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is for each Department to judge what consultation is necessary in the light of the size of the prospective purchase and other relevant consideration.

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received concerning the affairs of Electronic Data Systems in the past two years; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a small number of such representations, including from hon. Members who have asked questions on the matter.

Ministers and Relatives (Financial Advantage)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library a copy of the rules governing Ministers and their relatives receiving presents or obtaining financial advantage; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A memorandum by the then Secretary of the Cabinet describing the guidance given to Minsters on this matter was submitted in evidence to the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life in 1975. A copy is in the Library. The current guidance is to all intents and purposes the same, and continues to be based on the principle that Ministers must so order their affairs that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their private interests and their public duties.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy at the forthcoming EEC Heads of Government meeting in Copenhagen on 4-5 December to raise reports that plutonium and other nuclear explosive materials have been stolen from civil nuclear facilities in the European Economic Community and sold on the black market in Khartoum.

The Prime Minister: No. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 19 November 1987.

Engagements

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Beith To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I also received the Soviet ambassador, who informed me of Mr. Gorbachev's acceptance of my invitation to make a short stop in the United Kingdom on his way to the United States/Soviet summit meeting in Washington. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Rain Forests

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her

Majesty's Government have considered special aid for countries whose Governments wish to preserve areas of tropical rain forest, but are forced by economic and population pressures to give them over to development.

Mr. Chris Patten: The United Kingdom actively supports the tropical forestry action plan, which has a conservation component. Our bilateral project aid expenditure on forestry has increased threefold over the last five years. We have also contributed to the World Wildlife Fund's innovative scheme to conserve the Korup national park in Cameroon, one of Africa's richest areas of rain forests. We are ready to do more, but we must also respect aid recipient Governments' views on the competing priorities for aid funds.

Ethiopia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received about the developing famine crisis in Ethiopia; what urgent actions are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to render assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on 17 November, at columns 480-81. Since then the European Community has allocated the equivalent of a further £7 million in emergency aid, of which Britain's share amounts to about £1·5 million.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will publish information on the total number of unemployed people whose claim to benefit has been disqualified or reduced under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 from 5 October 1986 to the most recent available date, together with a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of initial disqualifications that were for less than 13 weeks, *(b)* the number that were later reviewed and the disqualification lifted or altered and *(c)* estimates of the proportions that fell under each of the heads *(a)* to *(d)* of section 20(1); and if he will also show how many of these were (i) disqualifications in respect of unemployment benefit alone and (ii) abatement of supplementary benefit where there is no unemployment benefit entitlement;

(2) if he will publish information on the number of claims for unemployment benefit made in the three month period before 5 October 1986, showing how many of these claims were initially disqualified under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, together with a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of these initial disqualifications that were for less than six weeks, *(b)* the number that were later reviewed and the disqualification lifted or altered and *(c)* estimates of the proportions that fell under each of the heads *(a)* to *(d)* of section 20(1);

(3) if he will publish information on the number of claims for unemployment benefit made in the three month period after 5 October 1986, showing how many of these claims were initially disqualified under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, together with a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of these initial disqualifications that were for less than 13 weeks, *(b)* the number that were later reviewed and the disqualification lifted or altered and *(c)* estimates of the proportions that fell under each of the heads *(a)* to *(d)* of section 20(1).

Mr. Lee: Approximately 1·6 million new claims for unemployment benefit were made in the 13 weeks ended 4 October 1986, and 1·1 million in the 13 weeks ended 3 January 1987.

Details of adjudication officers' decisions disqualifying claims for unemployment benefit under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 in each of the quarters ended 30 September 1986, 31 December 1986, 31 March 1987 and 30 June 1987 are shown in the table; the numbers in brackets represent decisions, whenever made, varied on review in each quarter. No analysis is made of the length of disqualification imposed or the number of consequent decisions abating supplementary benefit, and this information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

	Quarter ended			
	30 September 1986	*31 December 1986*	*31 March 1987*	*30 June 1987*
Section 20(1)*(a)*	110,865 (1,427)	107,510 (1,674)	99,124 (1,989)	95,991 (1,837)
Section 20(1)*(b)*	465 (18)	534 (23)	549 (29)	494 (21)
Section 20(1)*(c)*	304 (13)	315 (7)	412 (23)	428 (14)
Section 20(1)*(d)*	10 (5)	7 (8)	19 (17)	13 (—)
Section 20(1)*(e)*	1,227 (58)	1,589 (86)	1,625 (120)	1,242 (51)
Total	112,871 (1,521)	109,955 (1,798)	101,729 (2,178)	98,168 (1,923)

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the industrial relations practices of Electronic Data Systems in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits have been granted to those working directly or indirectly, for Electronic Data Systems in the United Kingdom; if any hon. or right hon. Members have made representations in support of such work permits being granted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since 1984, 204 work permits have been issued for employment with Electronic Data Systems. Information about work permits issued in respect of persons working for employers associated with the company is not collated centrally. No representations in

support of work permit applications from Electronic Data Systems have been made by any right hon. or hon. Member.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have lost a higher percentage of manufacturing jobs than Wales and Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lee: International comparisons of labour market statistics should be treated with caution as it is difficult to obtain data for different countries on a consistent basis.

The available data do not cover all OECD countries and are limited to the period 1979 to 1985 and to employees in employment. On this evidence no OECD country taken as a whole showed a greater percentage decline in manufacturing employment than Scotland and Wales. However, as with the United Kingdom, some regions within other OECD countries will have shown greater losses in manufacturing employment than the average.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how managing agencies assess whether the sponsors of training places under the new community programme are using trainees as substitutes for regular staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The community programme and other adult training programmes are being replaced by a new training programme for unemployed people from September 1988. The Manpower Services Commission is currently considering the detailed operational arrangements for the new programme, including the arrangements for employer-based placements and training, and has been asked to submit its recommendations by mid-January next

Earnings

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information covering each of the last five years showing the number of employees whose earnings fell below *(a)* the minimum for payment of national insurance contributions and *(b)* the PAYE threshold; and if he will estimate what proportion of these employees work part-time and what proportion are aged under 18 years and 18 to 21 years.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 17 November 1987]:* The available information from the new earnings survey is not sufficiently precise to make reliable estimates separately distinguishing the numbers with earnings below these two thresholds. However, broad estimates of the numbers of employees with earnings below the PAYE threshold are as follows:

April	*millions*
1983	2¼
1984	2¾
1985	3
1986	3
1987	3

The vast majority of these employees work part-time. Information is not available on which to make estimates of their ages.

WALES

Ambulance Service (Tanat Valley)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales from where, and under the auspices of which health authorities, the ambulance service is provided for in the Tanat valley.

Mr. Grist: Ambulance services for the Tanat valley are normally provided from the ambulance station at Llanfyllin, administered by Powys health authority. Additional ambulances are available from Bala ambulance station, administered by Gwynedd health authority and Chirk ambulance station, administered by Clwyd health authority.

Rural Roads

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any further plans to give extra financial aid to local authorities in Wales to improve rural roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be announcing local authority capital allocations for 1988-89 shortly.

Rating Reform

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the likely impact on farmers in Wales of the proposed community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no separate estimate of the likely impact of our proposals upon farmers. Like everyone else, they will be individually liable for the community charge.

University Hospital of Wales

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the appointment of a paediatric cardiologist at the University Hospital of Wales will be confirmed.

Mr. Grist: The Department indicated to South Glamorgan health authority in April 1986 that funds were available to appoint a consultant paediatric cardiologist. I understand that the authority has since been seeking to make an appointment.

Cardiothoracic Services

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will act on the recommendations made in the 1981 working party report on cardiothoracic services in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Action has already been taken to implement the conclusions of the Welsh Medical Committee working party on cardiothoracic services. Heartbeat Wales was established and funded by the Welsh Office and Health Education Council to develop a strategy for preventing heart disease. The majority of district health authorities in

Wales have appointed consultant physicians with a special interest in cardiology. The development of a cardiac centre in Cardiff is presently being planned and approved in principle for the first phase of the development, the paediatric cardiac unit, has already been given to South Glamorgan health authority.

Infant Cardiology Services

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve infant cardiology services in south and west Wales.

Mr. Grist: Approval in principle has been given to South Glamorgan health authority to develop a paediatric cardiac centre at the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, which will provide cardiology services for children of all ages, including infants.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to assume responsibility for approving and monitoring the use of waste disposal facilities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We are satisfied that the regulatory functions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 can continue to be undertaken by district councils in Wales.

Contaminated Soil

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the dumping of a consignment of 800 tons of contaminated soil at the Dark lane tip near Rossett in Clwyd, following importation through the port of Mostyn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I have received a letter from the hon. Gentleman.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Entry Visas

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the average length of time taken to dispose of applications made by Pakistan nationals for a visa to enter the United Kingdom as a student; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Student visas for Pakistani and other nationals are normally granted within 24 hours of application. Doubtful cases may take longer depending on the extent to which further inquiries are necessary to establish that the requirements of the immigration rules are met.

Diplomatic Representation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost of maintaining a diplomatic presence in *(a)* Nicaragua, *(b)* Honduras, *(c)* Guatemala, *(d)* Costa Rica, *(e)* El Salvador and *(f)* Panama in each of the past three years.

Mrs. Chalker: The cost of maintaining a diplomatic presence in the nominated countries, for the years from 1984-85 to 1986-87, is shown in the table.

Figures for Nicaragua are included with those for Costa Rica, where most of the staff accredited to Managua are resident.

£'000

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Nicaragua	Included with Costa Rica		
Honduras	350	396	357
Guatemala	213	109	245
Costa Rica	[1]428	[1]382	[1]419
El Salvador	106	78	104
Panama	412	423	401

[1] Including Nicaragua.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hungerford Shootings

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to make the full report and finding of the coroner's inquest into the Hungerford shootings available to hon. Members.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. This is a matter within the discretion of the coroner, who is an independent judicial officer, to whose attention my hon. Friend's question has been drawn.

Foreign Nationals

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each year since 1978, how many foreign nationals have successfully applied for residence in the United Kingdom from *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* East Africa, *(e)* Hong Kong, *(f)* India, *(g)* New Zealand, *(h)* Pakistan, *(i)* South Africa, *(j)* South America, *(k)* Sri Lanka, *(l)* United States of America, *(m)* West Africa, *(n)* the West Indies and *(o)* Zimbabwe.

Mr. Renton: The numbers of persons granted settlement in the United Kingdom in each year from 1978 to 1986 are published by nationality in table 21 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1986" (Cm. 166), copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many foreign nationals have successfully applied for refugee status in the United Kingdom; and what were their countries of origin, for each year since 1978;

(2) how many foreign nationals have unsuccessfully applied for refugee status in the United Kingdom; and what were their countries of origin, for each year since 1978.

Mr. Renton: The available information on the outcome of applications for refugee status, by nationality, is for the years 1979 to 1986. The figures for 1979 to 1984 were published in tables 5A-5F of Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1985" (issue 12/86). The corresponding figures for 1985 (which have been revised since the issue of that bulletin) and 1986 were published in tables 6 and 7 of the corresponding bulletin for 1986 (issue 13/87). Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Police (Carlisle)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria as to the number of police deployed in the Carlisle area per year since 1977.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Cumbria that the information requested is as follows:

ON 1 JANUARY	*NORTHERN DIVISION (Carlisle City and Carlisle Rural Sub-Divisions)*	
	Police Establishment	*Police Strength*
1977	217	198
1978	218	204
1979	218	198
1980	226	210
1981	223	216
1982	228	222
1983	227	216
1984	226	221
1985	228	221
1986	227	220
1987	227	221
1 November 1987	230	224

Licensing Hours

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information he has as to licensing hours for *(a)* restaurants and *(b)* public houses and similar establishments in other EEC countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information indicates that there are no restrictions on the hours during which alcohol may be sold in France, Belgium, Portugal and Italy, and few restrictions in Spain. Licensing hours in the Federal Republic of Germany vary by area but are generally from 6 am to 1 am; in the Netherlands they are from 5 am to 1 am; and in Denmark from 5 am to midnight, with extensions available to restaurants.

English Wine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to liberalise the licensing restrictions applying to wine tasting at English vineyards.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Vineyard proprietors with a justices' on-licence, authorising the sale and consumption of wine on the premises, would benefit from the revised licensing hours on weekdays provided by the Licensing Bill. We are not at present persuaded that the law should be relaxed further.

Police (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visits he has made to police headquarters in Wales in the last 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has made no such visits.

Emergency Services

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the arrangements for mobilising the emergency services in the event of a major incident in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The operational response to a major incident is a matter for the emergency services concerned. The recent tragic fire at King's Cross underground station has shown how effectively the London services carry out their responsibilities.

Firearms

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the proposed changes in firearms legislation and shotgun certificates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Next week.

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what matters concerning those employed, directly or indirectly by Electronic Data Systems, have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions during the last two years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people, employed directly or indirectly by Electronic Data Systems, have breached immigration law, rules or procedures on entering the United Kingdom, in the last two years; what were the names and nationalities of those persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Following allegations in September 1986 that breaches of the immigration laws had been committed by employees of Electronic Data Systems, irregularities were identified in 25 cases after investigation by the immigration service. All these concerned were citizens of the United States of America. We do not consider that it would be right to publish their names. In none of the cases was prosecution considered practicable by the police and none was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he, or his officials, have had any meetings in the United States of America with representatives of Electronic Data Systems to discuss any matters, including those employed directly or indirectly by the company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Over the past two years, Home Office officials and Electronic Data Systems representatives have met on two occasions: in April 1986, at EDS headquarters, in the course of market research into prospective computer suppliers and systems; and in January 1987, as part of a technical equipment appraisal, at the sites of major computer users, where EDS representatives were present in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations from or met right hon. and hon. Members to discuss any matters concerning Electronic Data Systems, or those employed directly or indirectly by the company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have not met any right hon. or hon. Members to discuss matters concerning Electronic Data

Systems or its employees. I have received representations concerning immigration irregularities from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) to which my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Minister of State, the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) replied.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people employed directly or indirectly by Electronic Data Systems, have been refused entry into the United Kingdom; if any such persons appealed against such refusals; if any right hon. or hon. Members have made representations on behalf of such persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

DNA Tests

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the results of the DNA blood testing trials which have recently taken place; and whether Her Majesty's Government will introduce them for all applicants for settlement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on 9 November at column *21*.

Citizenship

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to reassure those with an entitlement to register as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981 who fail to do so by 31 December about their position in the United Kingdom after that date.

Mr. Hurd: I am today publishing a free information leaflet entitled "British citizenship: A Reminder" which explains that, other than the right to register, the rights of those affected will not be changed in any way if they do not apply to be registered as British citizens. The leaflet explains that they will not lose their entitlements to special benefits or their right to vote and that their position under the immigration laws is not changed. The leaflet also makes clear that an application for naturalisation may still be made at any time. The leaflet is now available from the nationality division of the Home Office and is being sent to community relations councils, citizens advice bureaux and other organisations so that they can give them to inquirers. I am placing copies of the leaflet in the Library. I hope this information will help to reassure people who do not use their right to register about their position here after 31 December.

Refugees

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will implement the main recommendation of the British Refugee Council's policy document "Settling for a Future", a copy of which has been sent to him, by taking the lead in bringing together the relevant Government departments, local authorities and voluntary agencies to develop a co-ordinated plan for the resettlement of refugees in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Consideration of the Government's response is well advanced under the co-ordination of the voluntary services unit at the Home Office. The response will shortly be conveyed to Lord Chitnis, chairman of the British Refugee Council.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

HMI Reports

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average time lapse between the inspection of a school by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools and the publication of the report consequent on each inspection.

Mr. Dunn: Of those inspections which have taken place since June 1986, and for which a report has been issued, the average time lapse between the two events was 42 weeks. Of those 90 per cent. were issued within 38 weeks. Reports are not issued, as a general rule, during school holidays and were not issued during the general election campaign. This has worsened the average.

However, no institution or governing body has to wait that long to know the findings of inspections as HMI discusses these and other matters with the head and staff during and at the end of each inspection, and with the governing bodies shortly after.

It remains the aim of HMI that reports should be issued within six months of an inspection and it is working to achieve that time scale. It is hoped to introduce new procedures in the new year that will reduce the overall time taken to the six-month target.

Literacy

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many seven year olds undergoing state education are assessed as being unable to read and comprehend a single sentence.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected centrally.

Education Reform

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provisions he intends to make to enable the classics to be taught when the core curriculum comes into operation.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under our national curriculum proposals, it will be for schools and teachers to decide how much time to spend on each subject. The essential core and other foundation subjects will not take up all the available curricular space. There will therefore be scope for maintained schools to continue to offer other subjects such as classics to some or all pupils if they wish to do so.

Academically Gifted Children

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received with regard to the position of academically gifted children in the state maintained sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of responses to the Government's consultations on their proposals for educational reform have included comments about the position of academically gifted children. My right hon.

Friend has made it clear in the remit letter to science and maths working groups, as he will for the other working groups as they are set up, that he wants attainment targets and programmes of study for foundation subjects in the national curriculum to be framed so as to challenge all gifted children to develop their talents to the utmost.

University Posts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give the numbers of full-time academic posts of each university in Scotland in each year since 1977-78, differentiating between those posts wholly funded by the university, those externally funded research posts, and those externally funded non-research posts;

(2) if he will give the numbers of full-time academic posts of each university in England and Wales in each year since 1977-78, differentiating between those posts wholly funded by the university, those externally funded research posts, and those externally funded non-research posts.

Mr. Jackson: The information for 1986-87 is given in the following table. Figures for earlier years from 1980-81 have been published in volume 1, "University Statistics" published by the University Statistical Record. Figures for 1977-78 and 1978-79 are contained in "Statistics of Education: Universities" published by the University Grants Committee. Copies of these documents are in the Library.

Full-time academic staff in each university 1986-87

Full-time staff

	Teaching and research		*Research only*	
	Wholly university financed	*Others*	*Wholly university financed*	*Others*
1 Aston	264	9	4	72
2 Bath	358	5	12	125
3 Birmingham	903	142	34	441
4 Bradford	384	31	6	86
5 Bristol	715	56	32	393
6 Brunel	246	10	6	120
7 Cambridge	1,133	20	21	664
8 City	276	31	3	76
9 Durham	413	33	29	133
10 East Anglia	378	42	4	89
11 Essex	260	12	6	93
12 Exeter	460	9	13	71
13 Hull	416	12	2	86
14 Keele	236	28	10	37
15 Kent	344	22	3	103
16 Lancaster	469	3	10	124
17 Leeds	952	146	78	312
18 Leicester	445	71	4	197
19 Liverpool	830	62	18	227
20 London Business School	41	8	0	29
21 London University	4,510	971	180	2,788
22 Loughborough	470	44	2	213
23 Manchester Business School	33	1	3	13
24 Manchester University	1,254	103	18	403
25 Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	430	6	7	267
26 Newcastle	809	61	16	319
27 Nottingham	679	74	28	333
28 Oxford	1,194	134	86	623
29 Reading	520	50	13	192
30 Salford	347	29	7	75
31 Sheffield	800	17	25	222
32 Southampton	644	49	23	352
33 Surrey	322	24	12	227
34 Sussex	408	11	12	186
35 Warwick	524	27	10	207
36 York	303	11	9	158
37 Total England	22,770	2,364	746	10,056
38 Aberystwyth University College	197	96	20	59
39 Bangor University College	273	11	20	73
40 Cardiff University College	503	8	12	127
41 St. David's Lampeter	67	1	0	2
42 Swansea University College	380	14	3	85
43 University of Wales College of Medicine	135	60	11	131
44 University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	258	3	16	73
45 Total Wales	1,813	193	82	550
46 Total England and Wales	24,583	2,557	828	10,606

	Teaching and research		Research only	
	Wholly university financed	*Others*	*Wholly university financed*	*Others*
47 Aberdeen	536	68	20	171
48 Dundee	318	30	6	159
49 Edinburgh	1,098	125	38	467
50 Glasgow	990	59	33	384
51 Heriot Watt	289	6	10	110
52 St. Andrews	323	13	2	82
53 Stirling	256	15	5	80
54 Strathclyde	643	28	27	278
55 Total Scotland	4,453	344	141	1,731
56 Total Great Britain	29,036	2,901	965	12,337
57 Queen's University Belfast	581	162	77	142
58 University of Ulster	764	12	5	52
59 Total Northern Ireland	1,345	174	82	194
60 Total United Kingdom	30,381	3,075	1,051	12,531

Medical Research Council

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the annual expenditure in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland of the Medical Research Council, including administration costs, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is as follows:

	1984-85 £ million	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*
England[1]	98·7	102·7	108·3
Scotland	12·4	12·3	13·4
Wales	2·0	1·7	1·3
Northern Ireland	0·2	0·1	0·4
Total	113·3	116·8	123·4

[1] Includes headquarters and central expenses. MRC unit administrative expenses are included under the costs for each country.

Truancy

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will instigate a procedure to collect central statistics on the incidence of truancy.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under the Education Acts, the responsibility for taking action on truancy rests with local education authorities. It is they who should ensure that truancy levels in their schools are monitored and that action is taken to keep them under control. Against this background, and as my right hon. Friend obtains advice on school attendance as on other matters from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, he does not consider that the collection of truancy statistics centrally is at present justified.

School Numbers

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of Education and Science what information about standard numbers applying to primary and secondary schools under section 15 of the Education Act 1980 is held centrally; and whether comparable actual numbers are held centrally.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not keep a central record of standard numbers or planned admissions limits for individual schools. But LEAs and governors have a duty annually to publish planned admissions limits in respect of each school in literature for parents; and some of this information is made available to the Department. In addition, in January of each year, LEAs make a statistical return to the Department of the numbers of pupils on the roll of each school.

University Funding (Wales)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on university funding in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Grant allocations to university institutions in Wales are assessed by the University Grants Committee in accordance with the principals applied to all other universities in Great Britain, with appropriate allowances for special factors, including the university registry and the needs of Welsh medium teaching.

Education Reform

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the substantial number of responses to his consultative paper on educational reform, he will send each correspondent, or otherwise publicise, a circular indicating the areas of the Education Bill where the detailed plans were influenced by the nature of the responses received by him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There have been more than 17,000 responses to our consultation papers. It would not be appropriate to reply to each of these individually. The Government will, however, draw attention during Parliament's consideration of the Education Reform Bill to the many detailed aspects which have been influenced by the consultation process.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies his Department has carried out,

or is aware of, into the level of demand amongst parents for *(a)* devolved financial control over school budgets and *(b)* opting out of local education authority control.

Mr. Dunn: Correspondence and meetings with parents throughout the country have satisfied the Government that there is considerable support for these proposals, which were resoundingly endorsed by the electorate only a few months ago.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the treatment by him of capital receipts available to local authorities in respect of the overall allocation for England of education capital expenditure, and in respect of each allocation to each individual local authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The relationship between gross provision for local authority capital expenditure, allocations and the spending power from capital receipts is set out for 1987-88 in chapter 4 of the 1987 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56). As table 4.7 in Cm. 56 shows, spending power from receipts is taken into account in setting a total for capital allocations across the relevant authority services concerned which is compatible with the Government's public expenditure plans. The allocations made to individual local authorities cannot under the existing legislation take account of the receipts available to those authorities.

Testing

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he received the report on testing prepared by the centre for educational studies at King's college, London; and if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the report;

(2) if he will publish the report on testing prepared for him by the centre for educational studies at King's college, London.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The final version of the report "Attainment Targets and Assessment in the Primary Phase: Mathematics Feasibility Study" was delivered to the Department at the end of October and will be published shortly. I have made advance copies available to the task group on assessment and testing and to the national curriculum mathematics working group and I have asked these groups to take account of the report's conclusions in framing their advice.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Violence

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions British and Irish Ministers have reaffirmed their determination to continue to work together against those who use or support violance and their belief that the continued development of co-operation between the two police forces would contribute substantially towards this end.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* Frequently, and most recently when British and Irish Ministers met on 16 November when their discussion was devoted exclusively to security matters.

ENERGY

Continental Shelf

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the additional volume of oil and gas discovered within the United Kingdom continental shelf since April 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Estimates of the additional recoverable oil and gas reserves made in 1986 were given in the 1987 Brown Book and amounted to 220 million tonnes of oil (1,650 million barrels) and 4·4 trillion cu ft of gas.

Figures for 1987 are not yet available and will be published in the 1988 Brown Book.

Sellafield

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for the work currently being carried out at Sellafield by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., as a result of the nuclear installations safety audit published in December 1986, of the re-assessment made by the National Radiological Protection Board of increased risks from radiation and recommendations for a reduced dose level of radiation exposure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the NRPB report do not directly affect the work programme agreed between BNF plc and the HSE as a result of the HSE's "Safety Audit of BNFL Sellafield" report. However BNF plc assures me that in its detailed implementation of this work programme it will take account of the NRPB guidance.

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to ensure that in the forthcoming privatisation of the electricity supply industry present and future nuclear and coal-fired power stations will be treated equally with regard to obligations on the new owner-operator companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am considering a range of options for the future structure of the privatised electricity supply industry and for the regulatory arrangements which will be needed. No decisions have yet been taken.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to ensure that in any privatisation plan put forward for nuclear power, full consideration is given to the implications for the economics of present and future nuclear power stations of the report released on 18 November 1987 by the National Radiological Protection Board, entitled "Interim Guidance on the Implications of Recent Revisions of Risk Estimates" and the ICRP 1987 Como statement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It will be for the privatised electricity supply industry to make its own assessment of the economics of various forms of electricity generation, taking into account whatever factors are relevant. Proposals for the structure of the industry after privatisation and the means for ensuring a continuing role for the nuclear programme are being developed; decisions have not yet been taken.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will publish the number of visits made annually by safeguards inspectors from EURATOM to *(a)* each nuclear reactor operated in England and Wales by the CEGB, *(b)* each nuclear facility operated by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and *(c)* each nuclear fuel cycle facility and each nuclear reactor operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc., in each year since 1973;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of safeguards visits made to each nuclear reactor site operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board in England and Wales by Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency in each of the periods 1957 to 1965, 1966 to 1972, 1973 to 1978, and 1979 to 1987 inclusive, *(b)* the number of safeguards visits made to each nuclear fuel cycle facility in the United Kingdom operated now by British Nuclear Fuels plc. by International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards inspectors in each of the aforementioned periods and *(c)* the numbers of safeguards visits made to nuclear sites operated in the United Kingdom by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority by the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards inspectors in each of the above mentioned periods.

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table consisting of the number of safeguard visits made to each nuclear reactor site operated by the South of Scotland electricity board by inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency in each of the periods 1957 to 1965, 1966 to 1972, 1973 to 1978 and 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information about individual visits by inspectors over this period could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Submarine and Supply Bases (Personnel)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of non-military personnel employed at each of Britain's nuclear submarine and supply bases for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The number of non-military personnel employed at each of the bases is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Her Majesty's Naval Base, Devonport	16,500	17,200	16,700	15,600	3,500
Her Majesty's Naval Base, Rosyth	7,400	7,700	7,600	7,400	1,700
Clyde Submarine Base	3,100	3,100	3,100	3,000	2,800

Notes:

(1) The figures indicate all those employed at bases where nuclear submarines are base ported. Other vessels are also base ported at these locations and the figures above do not reflect those dedicated to work on nuclear submarines. No information specifically relating to the latter is available.

(2) The figures exclude Ministry of Defence police deployed at these locations.

(3) The steep reductions for Devonport and Rosyth between 1986 and 1987 reflect the transition of the former naval dockyards to commercial management.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of non-military personnel employed at each of Britain's nuclear submarine and supply bases who are currently undergoing, or registered with, Government-sponsored training schemes.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is as follows:

	Number
Clyde Submarine Base	22
Her Majesty's Naval Base, Devonport	15
Her Majesty's Naval Base, Rosyth	Nil

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many non-military personnel employed over the last five years at each of Britain's nuclear submarine and supply bases were recruited locally; and if he will express the figures as *(a)* a percentage of the total local work force and *(b)* a percentage of the total work force employed at each base.

Mr. Sainsbury: We do not hold separately the numbers of personnel who work directly on nuclear submarines at their base ports because other vessels share these bases. The estimated numbers of personnel recruited locally and employed at these bases (excluding Ministry of Defence Police) are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
HM Naval Base, Devonport	13,200	13,600	13,300	12,400	2,700
as a percentage of local workforce	10	10	10	9	2
as a percentage of workforce employed at the base	80	80	80	80	77
HM Naval Base, Rosyth	5,900	6,100	6,000	5,800	1,200
as a percentage of local workforce	11	11	11	11	2
as a percentage of workforce employed at the base	80	79	79	78	71
Clyde Submarine Base	2,300	2,200	2,200	2,000	1,900
as a percentage of local workforce	8	8	8	7	7
as a percentage of workforce employed at the base	75	71	71	67	68

The local work force is based on the numbers recorded as at 1986 in the Department of Employment defined travel-to-work areas which includes these naval bases. It excludes those in HM forces and the self-employed.

The steep reductions for Devonport and Rosyth between 1986 and 1987 reflect the transition of the former naval dockyards to commercial management.

Mileage Allowances

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of communications he has received since May from

organisations involved in the administration of territorial and reserve units about the taxation of mileage allowances of personnel involved in such administration.

Mr. Freeman: One, from the Council of Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Associations.

Equestrianism

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the mounted units in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 27 February 1987, at columns *212-13.*

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what circumstances personnel in non-mounted units are permitted to hunt in duty hours.

Mr. Freeman: Personnel in non-mounted units are not normally permitted to hunt in duty hours. However, in exceptional circumstances and at the commanding officer's discretion it may be permitted provided there is no detriment to military tasks.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take action to ensure the benefits of equestrian training afforded by playing polo in duty hours are spread according to the training needs of individuals.

Mr. Freeman: Polo takes place in duty time only at the commanding officer's discretion and not to the detriment of any military task.

Privately-owned horses only are used and personnel paticipate largely at their own expense and preference. I see no reason to seek to influence their choice.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any Ministry of Defence contractors have been prosecuted for fraud connected with defence contracts since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. Between January 1979 and October 1986 (the end of the most recent period for which full annual crime statistics are available) the Ministry of Defence police inquired into 36 allegations of serious crime involving defence contractors. Of these, 10 were classified as "no crime", nine were resolved by administrative action, eight resulted in prosecutions, and in the remaining cases investigations were still incomplete at the end of the period. I understand that there have also been a few such cases investigated by Home or Scottish Office police forces which have resulted in prosecutions but these are not centrally recorded.

Nuclear Test (Radiation)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects the report of the National Radiological Protection Board concerning nuclear test veterans to be published.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am pleased to be able to confirm that the work of the study is nearing completion and is expected to be received by the Ministry of Defence in December. I expect the report to be published very early next year.

SCOTLAND

Housing

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the £45 million receipts from the sale of council housing will be allocated to Scottish councils for urgent housing works; and how much of this will be allocated to Glasgow district and Strathclyde regional councils.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Individual gross housing revenue account capital allocations are determined, within the total gross resources available, on the basis of authorities' relative needs. Net allocations are calculated by deducting estimated receipts from gross allocations and each authority receives consent to incur capital expenditure up to its net figure, plus actual receipts generated. It is for authorities themselves to determine the priorities for expenditure within the resources allocated.

The estimated receipts assumed in Glasgow district council's gross housing revenue account allocation for 1987-88 amount to £15·61 million. The latest information I have indicates that the council expects actual receipts to total £17·98 million.

Stratchclyde regional council is not a housing authority.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council tenants in *(a)* Glasgow and *(b)* Scotland reported dampness in their homes in 1987; and if he will make a statement on the average waiting times for repairs or rehousing of persons and families reporting such conditions to their local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on the incidence of dampness is not yet available for the current year. Treatment of dampness-related problems in council housing is a matter for the local authorities concerned and no information is held centrally on waiting times.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for the number of homes built by the public and private sectors in Glasgow, Pollock constituency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is collected centrally only for complete district council areas and it is therefore not possible to give figures for individual parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to extend tenants' rights to buy homes at discounted prices to cover property in the private or independent sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation. Such sales are best left for agreement on a voluntary basis between landlord and tenant.

Electricity Costs

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the funds available to health authorities will be adjusted to take account of any increases in electricity costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. It is for health boards to meet these costs from their general allocations.

Cardiologists

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of National Health Service consultant cardiologists, and the number of consultant physicians practising cardiology, currently in posts in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 30 September 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 16 consultant cardiologists in post. Information on consultant physicians practising cardiology is not held centrally.

Private Hospital, Clydebank

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the total amount of financial aid that will be made available by various Government agencies to the private hospital to be built at Clydebank.

Mr. Lang: The company has yet to apply for Government assistance, so the level of support has not been determined. The project will be eligible for assistance, including the normal incentives available in enterprise zones, on the same basis as any other commercial undertaking.

Parole

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to announce the remit and membership of the review group on parole in Scotland;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that voluntary organisations with an interest in work with offenders will be represented in the membership of the review group on parole in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) on 9 November, at column *33*.

Prison Rules and Standing Orders

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to revise the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1954; and when he plans to publish them;

(2) what progress has been made in the revision of the Prison (Scotland) Standing Orders; and when they will be published.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is intended to consolidate and revise the Prison (Scotland) Rules and Standing Orders as soon as resources and other demands on the Scottish prison service permit. Revision of the rules will require a statutory instrument, which would be laid before Parliament in accordance with Prisons (Scotland) Act 1952, and published in the usual way. One section of standing orders, on communications between inmates and their families, was revised in 1983 and published with an abbreviated version for inmates. Where appropriate, future revisions of sections of standing orders will be made available in the same way.

Regional Development

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum was spent on regional development grant in 1986-87 in Scotland; and what sum he now intends to spend in 1987-88.

Mr. Ian Lang: Gross expenditure in Scotland on regional development grant in 1986-87 was £170 million. Provision for regional development grant in 1987-88 is £69 million.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether recently released mental patients will be liable for the poll tax..

Mr. Lang: The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 makes no provision for the exemption of mentally ill people as a group from personal community charge liability.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of men unemployed in Clydebank and Milngavie in September 1979 and September 1987, excluding the effect of Government special measures and part-time employment.

Mr. Lang: I understand the question is intended to relate to employment rather than unemployment. The available estimates, derived from the censuses of employment, show 9,308 males in employment in September 1981, and 8,846, of whom 8,401 were full-time, in employment in September 1984. Information on the numbers on Government employment and training programmes is not collected by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each postal code area and local authority ward in Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy district council areas the number unemployed for October 1987, October 1986 and October 1983.

Mr. Lang: *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. Postcode sectors do not necessarily match district boundaries. The number of unemployed claimants in Kirkcaldy postcode sectors, which include Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy districts, in October 1983, October 1986 and October 1987 is shown in table 1. The number of unemployed claimants within each ward in Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy districts in October 1983, 1986 and 1987 is shown in tables 2 and 3. Figures for October 1983 are not comparable with those for October 1986 and October 1987 because of changes in the coverage of the count.

This information is available in the Library.

Table 1
Unemployed claimants—Kirkcaldy postcode sectors

		October[1] *1983*	*October 1986*	*October 1987*
KY 1 1	Kirkcaldy	360	509	451
KY 1 2	Kirkcaldy	447	692	635
KY 1 3	Kirkcaldy	347	473	448
KY 1 4	Leven and Methil	246	284	296
KY 2 5	Kirkcaldy	564	739	695
KY 2 6	Kirkcaldy	1,046	1,362	1,225
KY 3 0	Kirkcaldy	225	257	269
KY 3 9	Kirkcaldy	242	406	324
KY 4 0	Cowdenbeath	352	478	446
KY 4 8	Cowdenbeath	282	395	406
KY 4 9	Cowdenbeath	450	762	709
KY 5 0	Cowdenbeath	515	691	569

		October[1] 1983	October 1986	October 1987
KY 5 8	Cowdenbeath	560	858	812
KY 5 9	Cowdenbeath	366	557	519
KY 6 1	Glenrothes	361	421	377
KY 6 2	Glenrothes	618	736	689
KY 6 3	Glenrothes	209	284	256
KY 7 4	Glenrothes	614	705	663
KY 7 5	Glenrothes	288	346	295
KY 7 6	Glenrothes	510	703	637
KY 7 7	Cupar	177	250	203
KY 8 1	Leven and Methil	367	464	397
KY 8 2	Leven and Methil	537	601	541
KY 8 3	Leven and Methil	434	548	530
KY 8 4	Leven and Methil	366	476	473
KY 8 5	Leven and Methil	692	787	689
KY 8 6	Leven and Methil	75	127	92
KY 9 1	Anstruther	74	84	88
KY10 2	Anstruther	115	131	141
KY10 3	Anstruther	194	231	194
KY11 1	Dunfermline	328	486	446
KY11 2	Dunfermline	469	690	553
KY11 3	Dunfermline	126	164	142
KY11 4	Dunfermline	890	1,111	1,007
KY11 5	Dunfermline	302	491	377
KY12 0	Dunfermline	307	447	466
KY12 7	Dunfermline	163	221	245
KY12 8	Dunfermline	428	573	489
KY12 9	Dunfermline	511	631	624
KY13 7	Cowdenbeath	239	394	338
KY14 6	Cupar	106	105	131
KY14 7	Cupar	135	151	146
KY15 4	Cupar	190	201	210
KY15 5	Cupar	205	182	195
KY16 0	St. Andrews	149	177	173
KY16 8	St. Andrews	267	340	316
KY16 9	St. Andrews	85	146	148
Total	16,533	21,867	20,075	

[1] This column excludes some unemployed claimants for whom postcodes were not available at the time of compilation.

Table 2
Dunfermline District

Ward	Unemployed Claimants October 1983	October 1986	October 1987
Ballingry	353	530	491
Blacklaw/St. Leonards	150	198	185
Blairhall/High Valleyfield	320	308	281
Cairneyhill/Crossford	94	174	114
Cowdenbeath Foulford	187	309	276
Cowdenbeath Moss-Side	290	382	362
Cowdenbeath South East	144	211	234
Crossgates/Hill of Beath	117	163	154
Dalgety Bay East/Aberdour	135	182	175
Dalgety Bay West/North Queensferry	138	219	167
Dunfermline Central	135	221	227
Dunfermline North 1	119	130	111
Wellwood/Milesmark/Dunfermline North 2	129	166	173
Dunfermline West	159	215	224
Dunfermline/Aberdour	178	225	181
Dunfermline Garvock	123	156	142
Dunfermline/Linburn	294	273	282
Dunfermline/Pitcorthie	107	137	109
Dunfermline/Woodmill	268	318	280
Inverkeithing East	209	262	242
Inverkeithing West	212	278	226
Kelty East/West	180	208	198
Kincardine/Culross	204	209	234
Limekilns/Dunfermline/Pitreavie West	136	165	144
Lochgelly North	203	287	277
Lochgelly South	207	273	244
Lochore	259	328	320
Oakfield/Lumphinnans	278	361	32
Oakley North/Saline	173	181	187
Oakley South/Torryburn	191	220	217
Rosyth East	175	248	195
Rosyth South	107	142	129
Rosyth West	123	185	146
Townhill/Kingseat/Halbeath	158	232	238
Total	6,255	8,096	7,497

Table 3
Kirkcaldy District

Ward	Unemployed Claimants October 1983	October 1986	October 1987
Aberhill/Methil	237	280	268
Auchmuty	427	427	410
Bennochy	182	213	171
Burntisland West	277	349	329
Cardenden	256	312	268

Ward	Unemployed Claimants October 1983	October 1986	October 1987
Denbeath and Savoy	280	303	292
Dunearn	261	297	258
Dunnikier	109	153	119
Dysart/Wemyss	251	298	300
East Wemyss and Muiredge	245	239	229
Fair Isle	268	327	296
Gallatown/Thornton	201	276	275
Glenwood North	323	354	327
Glenwood West	232	297	268
Hayfield	227	279	305
Kennoway	312	265	263
Kinghorn-Burntisland East	203	269	210
Kinglassie/Bowhill	310	378	302
Kirkland/Mountfleurie	374	346	366
Leslie	196	254	210
Leven East	152	246	217
Leven West	376	331	326
Linktown/Auchtertool	287	334	311
Methilhill	351	394	321
North Glenrothes/Markinch/Star	513	677	637
Old Buckhaven	228	299	252
Pathhead/Victoria	198	313	299
Pitteuchar	170	212	175
Raith	116	159	124
Rimbleton	249	253	254
Sinclairtown	286	373	327
Smeaton	235	282	254
South Parks	225	233	203
Stenton/Balgonie	189	232	211
Torbain	202	265	249
Valley	354	360	332
Windygates	197	280	215
Woodside	212	238	207
Total	9,711	11,397	10,380

Glue Ear

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the waiting time for an operation for the condition known as glue ear in each of the health boards of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The mean waiting times of patients who were admitted from the waiting list and have undergone an operation for glue ear in 1985, the latest year for which statistics are centrally available, are as follows. 94 per cent. of the cases were under age 16.

	Mean wait (in days)
Argyll and Clyde	89
Ayrshire and Arran	99
Borders	—
Dumfries and Galloway	99
Fife	210
Forth Valley	43
Grampian	69
Greater Glasgow	46
Highland	(59)
Lanarkshire	(62)
Lothian	104
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Tayside	52
Western Isles	—
Scotland	96

Figures in brackets are based on fewer than five waiting-list admissions during the year.

Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply of 10 November to the hon. Member for Monklands, West, *Official Report*, column *138*, whether he is now in a position to make a further statement on the implementation of section 13 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following discussion with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to implement section 13 of the Act from 1 February 1988.

The first group of disabled school children to receive statutory assessment by local authority social work departments under the terms of section 13 will effectively be those reaching the statutory school leaving age in 1990. Local authorities will be able to decide for themselves how far they can apply the new arrangements on a non-statutory basis to children and young persons who may leave school before then.

These arrangements will improve considerably the transition from special education to other forms of provision, and will be of material benefit to disabled children at this critical stage of their lives.

Aberdeen College of Commerce

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received from Grampian regional council on the closure of the main building at Aberdeen college of commerce.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand from Grampian regional council that as a result of a structural survey of the main building of Aberdeen college of commerce, carried out by a firm of consultant engineers, the education authority has decided to close the main college building on grounds of safety.

Alternative accommodation is actively being sought for the 2,000 or so staff and students who use the building. The college's other annexes are not affected, and classes are proceeding there as normal. The education authority has already identified spare capacity in a number of schools and other buildings, and many others in Aberdeen have been generous with offers of help. In some cases, college lecturers are teaching students at their employers' premises, and in other cases church halls, hotel rooms and banks are being used.

The education authority expects that no significant teaching time will be lost, and examinations should not be affected; and I understand that SCOTVEC will be adopting a sympathetic treatment of students at the college whose courses have been interrupted.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep (Restrictions)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will impose restrictions under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 on the movement of sheep in north Yorkshire similar to those in operation in Cumbria where radioactivity levels in sheep have been found above the 1,000 becquerel level limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the very small number of breeding ewes that we have recorded in north Yorkshire as being above our action level, I do not think that at present there is any need to impose general movement restrictions on sheep in that area in order to protect food supplies. As a precaution, however, I have served a direction under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 on the owner of the one flock involved preventing him from moving sheep out of his flock without my express permission.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting in Brussels, which reconvened on 23 November.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council of Agriculture Ministers met in Brussels on 23-24 November to discuss budgetary stabilisers; that is to say, amendments to the common agricultural policy designed to ensure that its costs can be kept under control, and in particular the proposed stabilisers for a wide range of commodities which the House debated on 24 November.

The Council reconvened yesterday evening for further discussions on the basis of the revised document tabled by the Danish presidency. I greatly regret that, despite lengthy negotiations, it proved impossible to reach agreement. I of course defended the position which I explained to the House during the debate on 24 November.

The lack of agreement will be reported to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs who are meeting informally on Sunday and Monday, prior to the meeting of Heads of Government on 4 and 5 December.

The Council has adopted a decision to allow meat from animals treated with hormones to be traded within the Community for a further 12 months beyond the date of 31 December 1987 laid down in directive 85/649. The effect will be that, for that period, meat (and offals) from animals treated within the Community or in third countries, may be traded in accordance with existing arrangements. The Community deadline of 1 January 1988 for a ban on the administration to livestock of hormones for growth promotion will not be affected; and from that date there will be free trade within the Community in untreated meat. Our producers should benefit from that. The Council took its decision before the normal process of parliamentary scrutiny had been completed.

Lindane and Pentachlcrophenol

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to investigate the use of the chemicals Lindane and Pentachlcrophenol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

Pesticides including those containing Lindane and PCP are subject to the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986. They can be used only following formal approval based on the advice of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides which reviews the evidence of risk and advises on precautions. The aim of these procedures is to safeguard human health and the environment. The advisory committee is able to review its advice if new information becomes available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Registrations

2. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the rate of new company registrations; and at what rate these have grown since 1979.

35. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the rate of new company registrations; and at what rate these have grown since 1979.

70. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the rate of new company registrations; and at what rate these have grown since 1979.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer my hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Value Added Tax

6. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on proposals for harmonisation of value added tax within the European Economic Community.

48. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he would make a further statement on the European Commission's proposals on the harmonisation of value added tax.

56. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Commission of the European Communities' proposals for the harmonisation of value added tax rates in the European Community.

57. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current position within the European Economic Community institutions relating to the harmonisation to value added tax.

68. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's response to the European Commission's proposals regarding the harmonisation of value added tax.

81. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking within the Council of Ministers to amend the European Commission's proposals on value added tax changes.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to my right hon. Friend's reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith).

30. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he now expects to raise in the current year from value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: As indicated in his Autumn Statement, my right hon. Friend now expects to receive £23¾ billion in value added tax in the current financial year.

51. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received relating to a extension of value added tax to books, newspapers and other publications.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 19 November.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of value added tax refund claims under Customs and Excise notice 714 processed for the fiscal year 1986-87.

Mr. Lilley: I presume my hon. Friend refers to Customs and Excise notice No. 719 (Refund of VAT to do-it-yourself builders). The number of claims processed in the fiscal year 1986-87 was 8,950.

Personal Taxation

13. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to harmonise the tax take from couples who are unmarried but living together with those who are married.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have made clear that we consider it important to remove the tax penalties on marriage.

Pound Sterling

16. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the real value of the pound sterling since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: In real terms the sterling index averaged 90 in 1979 and is estimated to have been 89·7 in October 1987.

Economic Prospects

17. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss economic prospects for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Excheequer gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about that part of his Autumn Statement which dealt with the economic prospects for 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend's Autumn Statement has been widely welcomed.

Manufacturing Industry

18. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufactured exports since 1981.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis).

27. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of trade in manufactured goods for the United Kingdom in 1979; and what is the anticipated figure for 1988.

Mr. Major: Since 1979 the volume of the United Kingdom's manufactured exports have grown by 27 per cent. In 1988 the deficit in manufactured trade is likely to show a £9 billion deficit, largely because of the rapid growth in the United Kingdom economy compared to that of its competitors. In 1979 exports of manufactures were £31 billion and there was a surplus of £2·7 billion on manufactured trade.

43. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufacturing productivity since 1980.

91. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufacturing productivity since 1980.

Mr. Major: Manufacturing output per head grew at an average annual rate of 5¼ per cent. between 1980 and the third quarter of 1987.

58. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the net real rate of return in British manufacturing.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

Public Borrowing

19. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the main factors currently influencing the level of public borrowing in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: Buoyant tax revenues from a healthy growing economy and success in containing public expenditure have led to a substantial reduction in public sector borrowing.

Economic Growth

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of productivity in the United Kingdom economy as a whole; and how these compare with the position in other major industrialised countries.

40. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for growth of productivity in the United Kingdom economy as a whole; and what are the comparable figures in other major industrialised countries.

71. **Mr. Ward** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of productivity in the United Kingdom economy as a whole; and what is the comparable figure in other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Brooke: Over the year to the second quarter of 1987, total output per employee rose by 2¾ per cent. in the United Kingdom. This is substantially faster than in the United States, Japan or Germany.

37. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how the rate of economic growth in the United Kingdom compares with that of other major industrialised countries.

72. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how the rate of economic growth in the United Kingdom compares with that of other major industrialised countries.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member of Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock).

Job Creation

38. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the total of new jobs has increased since 1983; and how this compares with other European Economic Community countries.

59. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the total of new jobs has increased since 1983; and how this compares with other European Economic Community countries.

92. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the total of new jobs has increased since 1983; and what is the comparable figure in other European Economic Community countries.

96. **Mr. Sumburg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the total of new jobs has increased since 1983; and what is the comparable figure in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Lilley: Between 1983 and 1986 the number of jobs in the United Kingdom grew by almost 1 million, more than in the rest of the European Community put together.

Job Creation

39. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the extent to which Government economic policy has contributed to the fall in adult unemployment over the last 12 months.

54. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the extent to which Government economic policy has contributed to the fall in adult unemployment over the last 12 months.

85. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the extent to which Government economic policy has contributed to the fall in adult unemployment over the last 12 months.

86. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the extent to which Government economic policy has contributed to the fall in adult unemployment over the last 12 months.

89. **Mrs. Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the extent to which Government economic policy has contributed to the fall in adult unemployment over the last 12 months.

Mr. Major: The Government's policies have created a stable financial framework, and encouraged greater effort and enterprise. As a result, the United Kingdom is growing faster than any other major economy, and firms are taking on new workers at an accelerating rate. This has contributed to a fall in adult unemployment of almost 450,000 since October 1986, the largest 12-monthly fall on record.

Capital Gains Tax

23. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding the impact of current levels of capital gains tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of representations have been received and these will be borne in mind in the run-up to the Budget.

26. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he now expects the total proceeds from capital gains tax to be in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimated receipts from capital gains tax and corporation tax on gains are expected to be around £1·3 billion and £0·8 billion respectively. These estimates are unchanged from the 1987 FSBR.

Personal Credit

24. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the growth in personal credit over the past year.

Mr. Major: There is no evidence that consumer credit has been accelerating recently. Much of the increase in personal debt takes the form of lending for house purchase or home improvement.

Gross Domestic Product

25. **Mr. Michael Morris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom in the light of recent international developments.

32. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom in the light of recent international developments.

76. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom in the light of recent international developments.

Mr. Major: The Autumn Statement, which was published after the stock market fall, forecast growth in 1988 of 2½ per cent. in the United Kingdom economy as a whole and 3 per cent. in the non-oil economy.

Autumn Statement

28. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received following the publication of his Autumn Statement.

33. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received following the publication of his Autumn Statement.

102. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received following the publication of his Autumn Statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend's Autumn Statement has been widely welcomed.

Overseas Assets

29. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of net United Kingdom assets overseas; and how this compares with the position in other major countries.

36. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of net United Kingdom assets overseas; and how this compares with the position in other major countries.

Mr. Major: I refer to my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to my hon. Friend, the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Industrial Production

31. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of industrial production in the United Kingdom; and how this compares with 1983.

41. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of industrial production in the United Kingdom; and how this compares with 1983.

83. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of industrial production in the United Kingdom; and what was the comparable figure in 1983.

Mr. Major: In the third quarter of 1987, the index of output of the production industries was 114·3, more than 12 per cent. above its average level in 1983.

Take-Home Pay

34. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the real take-home pay of a married man with two children on male average earnings and on half male average earnings; and how these compare with 1978-79.

50. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the real take-home pay of a married man with two children on male average earnings and on half male average earnings; and how these compare with 1978-79.

97. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the real take-home pay of a married man with two children on male average earnings and on half male average earnings; and how these compare with 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on average male earnings is estimated to be £181·30 per week in 1987-88, an increase of 22·9 per cent. over 1978-79. The equivalent figure for real take-home pay for a man on half average earnings is £107·75, an increase of 18·5 per cent. over 1978-79. Average male earnings are calculated over all occupations for men paid at adult rates working a full week.

New Coins

42. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the proposed new coins will be in circulation; in what denominations they will be; and if he will make a statement on their sizes and shapes.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are considering the responses to the consultation pamphlet "The United Kingdom Coinage". No decision has yet been made.

World Economy

44. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the major industrialised countries to discuss prospects for the world economy.

88. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet his ounterparts in the Group of Seven to discuss the international financial situation.

100. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the major industrialised countries to discuss prospects for the world economy.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the major industrialised nations meet from time to time to discuss a range of international economic issues.

Public Expenditure

45. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the movement of general Government expenditure since 1982-83; and what this now represents as a proportion of gross domestic product.

47. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the movement of general Government expenditure since 1982-83; and what this now represents as a proportion of gross domestic product.

Mr. Major: In real terms general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, grew by about 1¾ per cent. a year in the period 1982-83 to 1986-87; as a percentage of GDP it is expected to be about 42¼ per cent. in 1987-88. For further details see tables 2.1 and 2.2 of the Autumn Statement 1987 HC No. 110.

90. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest figure for the public expenditure outturn in 1987-88.

Mr. Major: The latest forecast of the planning total for 1987-88 is £147·6 billion as set out in the 1987 Autumn Statement.

USA (Treasury Secretary)

46. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to have talks with Mr. James Baker, United States Treasury Secretary.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets Mr. Baker from time to time.

Rented Accommodation

49. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to create a tax incentive for owners of surplus accommodation to make it available for rent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Unemployment Costs

52. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the current cost of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: The estimated expenditure on unemployment and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed is £6,050 million. In addition, it is estimated that £1,300 million will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the recipient finds employment.

Meals (Taxation)

53. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to update the tax treatment of meals provided by employers for employees whilst at work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In common with other benefits in kind, the tax treatment of meals provided by employers for employees whilst at work is kept under review.

Stock Exchange

55. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the chairman of the stock exchange; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has met Sir Nicholas Goodison on a number of recent occasions and they discussed a wide range of topics.

Privatisation

60. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further privatisation measures he now plans for the current year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No further privatisations are planned before the end of 1987.

75. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which will be the next industry in the public sector to be privatised; whether the Bank of England will offer a buy-back option to the underwriters, sub-underwriters or investors; and whether the privatised company will be debarred from acquiring smaller companies in the same British industrial sector for any period of time after privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No decisions have yet been taken on the next privatisation. We do not anticipate that there will be buy-back arrangements in future privatisations.

77. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the receipts from the privatisation programme in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of recent events, he has revised his estimates of privatisation proceeds to the Exchequer over the next few years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor indicated in his Autumn Statement that central estimates of privatisation proceeds were £5 billion per annum for 1987-88; 1988-89 and 1989-90. These estimates are subject to the extent of take-up of the Bank of England's BP share purchase arrangements.

Sovereign Debt

61. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue staff specialise in the assessment of sovereign debt problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 20 senior Inland Revenue officials (with supporting staff) are engaged, among their other duties, in establishing deductions legally due in respect of sovereign debts in computing taxable profits of banks.

G7 Discussions

62. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what subjects he has had recent discussions with other Finance Ministers in the Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven countries met in Washington on 27 September and discussed a range of international economic issues. I refer the hon. Member to the communiqué that was issued, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

CBI

63. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the economic prospects for the United Kingdom.

64. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the economic prospects for the United Kingdom.

93. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the director-general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the economic prospects for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

65. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to reduce the maximum amount of mortgage interest tax relief which may be claimed by joint owners of a single dwelling.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 29 October at column 398, to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

87. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units are currently receiving mortgage interest relief at source.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1987-88, about 8 million tax units are expected to benefit from the mortgage interest relief at source (MIRAS) scheme.

Government Expenditure

66. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for general Government expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product, excluding social security, since 1978-79.

Mr. Major: General Government expenditure, excluding social security benefits, as a percentage of GDP is as follows:

	percentage
1978-79	34·00
1979-80	34·25
1980-81	36·25
1981-82	35·50
1982-83	35·50
1983-84	34·25
1984-85	34·00
1985-86	32·25
1986-87	31·25

Special Car Tax

67. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is considering any changes in the special car tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Decisions on changes in car tax are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget judgment.

Rescheduled Debt (Interest)

69. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on progress on his call for concerted international action to reduce interest rates on rescheduled official debt.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor's proposal to reduce interest rates on rescheduled official debt is supported by several Paris Club creditor countries. He will continue to take every opportunity to press for support from those countries that have difficulties with his proposal.

Interest Rates

73. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the movement of interest rates since the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates have fallen by ½ per cent. to 9 per cent. since the Autumn Statement.

74. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 9 per cent.

Economic Progress

78. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the criteria by which he judges economic progress.

Mr. Major: Steady sustained growth, rising living standards, an improved supply side performance, and a reduction in inflation, a combination which has been experienced in the United Kingdom throughout the last five years.

Tobacco

79. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reduce the duty on tobacco.

Mr. Lilley: Decisions on excise duties are a matter for my right hon. Friend's Budget judgment.

Unit Labour Costs

80. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of unit labour costs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: In the second quarter of 1987 unit labour costs for the whole economy were 4 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Manufacturing unit wage costs were 1·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier in the third quarter of 1987.

Forestry

82. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is considering any changes in the tax system governing investment in forestry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Decisions on changes in taxation are a matter for the Chancellor's Budget statement.

Financial Markets (Meeting)

84. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call for a meeting of the Group of Seven to address the economic consequences for the United Kingdom and other countries of the recent crisis in the financial markets.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the major industrial countries meet from time to time to discuss a range of international economic issues. The next meeting will take place when judged appropriate.

BP Shares

94. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost to the Bank of England of the buy-back offer for partly-paid BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 5 November, at column *851*, to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest development in the BP sale.

Mr. Nigel Lawson: The sale of the Government's shares has been completed, and the full proceeds received.

National Economic Development Council

95. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to change the composition of the membership of the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Major: The current composition of the National Economic Development Council strikes the right balance between the various parties. When individual members leave, it is, of course, necessary to appoint replacements.

Inflation

98. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the estimated rise in inflation in Japan, West Germany and France over the next 12 months.

Mr. Lilley: Inflation is expected to remain low in all three countries.

Manufactured Exports

99. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of United Kingdom manufactured exports since 1981.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis).

Latin-American Debt

101. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the impact on leading United Kingdom banks of the reduced ability of Latin American countries to repay debt in the event of a cut in the United States budget deficit.

Mr. Lilley: The effect on world financial and trading conditions of a cut in the United States budget deficit should benefit all countries, including those in Latin America.

National Debt (Statistics)

Mr. Forth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the United Kingdom national debt as a percentage of gross national product, and any similar information available to him for the United States of America, France, Italy, Japan and Canada.

Mr. Lilley: United Kingdom national debt is defined as liabilities of the national loans fund which has no counterpart in many other countries. The normal basis for international comparisons is general Government net debt which, in the United Kingdom, comprises general Government debt held outside the public sector less general Government bank deposits and claims on the non-bank private sector, principally housing loans and outstanding taxes.

Comparable international OECD figures for general Government net national debt as a percentage of GDP/GNP are as follows:

Per cent.

	1975	*1979*	*1982*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom	57	49	46	47	47
United States of America	24	19	21	27	29
France	11	10	11	17	18
Italy	60	64	73	96	99
Japan	−2	15	23	26	26
Canada	4	11	17	30	34

Source: OECD Economic outlook June 1987.

Inland Revenue Computer

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what the cost would be of ensuring that *(a)* 80 per cent., *(b)* 90 per cent., *(c)* 95 per cent. and *(d)* 98 per cent. of the records for individuals held on the Inland Revenue computer included the correct address of the individual concerned.

Mr. Lawson: I regret that the information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many individuals computer-based data are held by the Inland Revenue; and if he will estimate for what proportion of these addresses are *(a)* not recorded or *(b)* recorded inaccurately.

Mr. Lawson: The Inland Revenue holds computer-based information for about 30 million individuals, and has home addresses for almost all of these.

There is no means of giving a reliable estimate of how many home addresses are inaccurate, since there are many taxpayers to whom the Revenue does not need to write at their home address from one year to the next.

Less-Developed Countries

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to take any further initiatives to assist the debt problems of less-developed countries.

Mr. Lilley: There is now a widespread support internationally for two of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's proposals — that is, that aid loans be converted to grants and that longer grace and repayment periods be applied to rescheduled officially guaranteed debt for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries of sub-Saharan Africa. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will continue to press for further support for his proposal to reduce interest rates on rescheduled official debts and for the proposal to enlarge the IMF's concessional structural adjustment facility.

Mileage Allowances

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what consultations he held with voluntary

organisations prior to implementing, through the Finance Act 1987, taxation of mileage allowances payable to those in voluntary work; and if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those organisations he consulted;

(2) what is the total amount of revenue which has accrued to the Treasury since the implementation of the Finance Act 1987 through the taxation of mileage allowances payable to voluntary organisations.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not clear what the hon. Member has in mind. The Finance Act 1987 does not contain any provisions relating to the tax treatment of mileage allowances payable to voluntary workers. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind perhaps she would like to write and let me have details.

Government Data Network

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he will use in selecting the successful contractor for the Government data network.

Mr. Brooke: Value for money, which includes quality, delivery against price and whole life costs.

Commercial Banks (Debt Relief)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from members of the public concerning the commercial banks' claim for tax relief on development country debt provisions.

Mr. Lilley: Approximately 840 representations have been received from members of the public, the vast majority of which are pre-printed cards as part of a campaign by War on Want.

Sovereign Debt

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue staff specialise in the assessment of sovereign debt problems.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* About 20 senior Inland Revenue officials (with supporting staff) are engaged, among their other duties, in establishing deductions legally due in respect of sovereign debts in computing taxable profits of banks.

Grande Carajas Project (Brazil)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the question of Her Majesty's Government's contribution to the EEC funding of the Grande Carajas project in Brazil.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* I have received no such representations.

Profit-related Pay Schemes

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employers have applied to register profit-related schemes with the Inland Revenue; and how many profit-related pay schemes have been accepted and registered by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Brooke: *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* By the end of October, 243 applications had been received and 146 schemes had been registered by the Inland Revenue.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the expenditure incurred by the Property Services Agency on construction and maintenance for clients carried out on a repayment basis is added to the cost of such work to cover the Property Services Agency's administration costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Actual administration costs as recorded in the PSA's staff costing system are recovered from the following:

Royal Ordnance Factory Organisation
Manpower Services Commission
British Telecom
Land Registry
Department of National Savings
Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Major new construction projects for other repayment clients

For other clients, administration costs are recovered by percentage additions to works expenditure as follows:

	Major New Works	*Minor New Works*	*Maintenance*
NATO	13·5	22	19
Property Repayment Service Departments	—	30	18
Other Repayment Clients	—	22	19
Work by PSA's Directly Employed Labour for all Clients	—	—	10
Work for United States Forces under the Cost Sharing Agreement	7·5	7·5	7·5
Other Work for United States Forces	—	—	20

Homeless Persons

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of homeless households accepted by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east became homeless through mortgage arrears *(a)* between 1 July 1981 and 30 June 1982, *(b)* between 1 July 1982 and 30 June 1983, *(c)* between 1 July 1983 and 30 June 1984, *(d)* between 1 July 1984 and 30 June 1985, *(e)* between 1 July 1985 and 30 June 1986 and *(f)* between 1 July 1986 and 30 June 1987; and if he will give this information for the south-east as a whole, and for each local authority in the region.

Mr. Waldegrave: Available information is as follows:

Households for whom local authorities accepted responsibility for securing accommodation: Percentage[1] becoming homeless through mortgage default/arrears

South East Region[2]	*Year Ending 30th June*					
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Greater London						
City of London	..	0	0	0	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	..	5	4	5	5	7
Barnet	..	4	3	2	3	2
Bexley	..	12	8	10	5	13
Brent	..	1	1	1	1	..
Bromley	..	5	7	7	5	9
Camden	..	1	..	..	..	..
Croydon	..	3	5	4	3	3
Ealing	..	2	1	1	1	1
Enfield	..	5	5	7	5	2
Greenwich	..	3	3	1	2	2
Hackney	..	..	..	..	..	..
Hammersmith and Fulham	..	0	0	1	..	..
Haringey	..	1	1	1	1	1
Harrow	..	3	6	2	6	6
Havering	..	9	7	7	12	10
Hillingdon	..	..	5	3	2	3
Hounslow	..	2	2	1	2	2
Islington	..	0	0	0	0	0
Kensington and Chelsea	..	0	0	0	0	0
Kingston upon Thames	..	2	2	2	0	3
Lambeth	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lewisham	..	2	3	3	2	2
Merton	..	3	1	1	6	3
Newham	..	..	..	..	..	5
Redbridge	..	3	6	9	8	8
Richmond upon Thames	..	2	4	4	4	3
Southwark	..	1	1	1	0	0
Sutton	..	7	5	3	6	4
Tower Hamlets	..	0	0	0	..	1
Waltham Forest	..	4	..	1	2	3
Wandsworth	..	2	2	1	0	1
Westminster	..	0	0	0	0	0
Bedfordshire						
Luton	12	17	15	24	25	16
Mid Bedfordshire	0	33	21	33	18	20
North Bedfordshire	7	3	—	—	5	10
South Bedfordshire	17	12	13	11	17	6
Berkshire						
Bracknell	11	7	19	5	22	12
Newbury	8	9	15	17	17	14
Reading	7	7	8	7	4	3
Slough	3	4	7	10	11	9
Windsor and Maidenhead	3	5	1	4	7	3
Wokingham	7	16	12	17	6	21
Buckinghamshire						
Aylesbury Vale	15	10	6	6	22	11
Chiltern	0	2	9	10	13	5
Milton Keynes	11	9	8	12	15	12
South Bucks	0	2	0	8	0	10
Wycombe	5	10	7	5	2	3
East Sussex						
Brighton	2	7	5	5	4	5
Eastbourne	2	7	10	13	8	8
Hastings	10	13	10	9	13	9
Hove	6	4	2	6	6	7
Lewes	8	9	3	11	10	7
Rother	9	8	6	6	10	12
Wealden	12	4	18	15	12	12
Essex						
Basildon	3	2	7	8	12	8
Braintree	11	6	23	29	24	25
Brentwood	6	0	0	7	4	8
Castle Point	32	18	17	..	31	12
Chelmsford	9	8	7	20	33	15
Colchester	7	4	5	6	17	10
Epping Forest	9	8	6	5	6	11

South East Region[2]	Year Ending 30th June					
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Harlow	3	8	3	3	4	4
Maldon	10	13	6	12	14	21
Rochford	17	23	15	15	16	9
Southend-on-Sea	14	18	20	17	16	10
Tendring	16	23	20	22	20	32
Thurrock	5	3	11	11	14	15
Uttlesford	21	20	9	16	17	13
Hampshire						
Basingstoke and Deane	2	4	5	12	13	8
East Hampshire	1	6	9	13	14	6
Eastleigh	6	2	10	15	21	20
Fareham	5	3	18	19	3	7
Gosport	11	6	7	3	9	20
Hart	0	10	6	4	14	17
Havant	1	1	7	4	2	4
New Forest	7	5	8	10	9	9
Portsmouth	5	3	10	8	12	9
Rushmoor	3	6	3	7	7	4
Southampton	6	4	1	2	1	23
Test Valley	2	3	3	6	5	4
Winchester	0	0	31	5	4	7
Hertfordshire						
Broxbourne	6	4	5	11	8	3
Dacorum	5	5	2	6	6	2
East Hertfordshire	6	8	11	10	22	22
Hertsmere	4	0	..	6	4	4
North Hertfordshire	7	5	6	5	5	4
St. Albans	2	2	4	5	10	5
Stevenage	6	2	5	1	3	7
Three Rivers	6	1	1	3	5	8
Watford	2	1	2	4	5	4
Welwyn Hatfield	5	5	5	3	3	4
Isle of Wight						
Medina	2	8	2	6	12	5
South Wight	3	7	14	5	9	13
Kent						
Ashford	6	10	7	16	22	15
Canterbury	24	26	6	8	9	11
Dartford	10	13	7	11	13	11
Dover	9	13	10	10	10	13
Gillingham	24	20	24	22	27	13
Gravesham	9	10	14	16	10	8
Maidstone	5	4	4	5	5	8
Rochester upon Medway	7	15	21	18	18	6
Sevenoaks	5	3	5	4	9	3
Shepway	20	18	18	15	15	9
Swale	19	13	7	11	14	11
Thanet	12	9	13	19	21	17
Tonbridge and Malling	5	6	8	7	7	10
Tunbridge Wells	2	6	11	7	8	4
Oxfordshire						
Cherwell	13	15	18	12	17	22
Oxford	2	1	1	0	2	0
South Oxfordshire	0	1	0	4	1	4
Vale of White Horse	10	12	8	13	22	17
West Oxfordshire	8	7	9	7	17	7
Surrey						
Elmbridge	2	6	3	4	4	4
Epsom and Ewell	..	2	0	4	3	6
Guildford	1	0	2	3	4	3
Mole Valley	0	7	2	0	4	4
Reigate and Banstead	1	3	2	4	6	7
Runnymede	9	3	0	9	2	4
Spelthorne	3	2	0	0	4	5
Surrey Heath	6	16	0	26	3	15
Tandridge	2	6	2	10	1	7
Waverley	3	2	5	3	5	3
Woking	4	5	14	8	3	4

South East Region[2]	Year Ending 30th June					
	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
West Sussex						
Adur	5	6	6	5	4	7
Arun	13	13	23	32	21	22
Chichester	0	0	3	1	1	1
Crawley	3	3	0	3	7	5
Horsham	7	9	2	2	7	16
Mid Sussex	5	10	6	8	6	6
Worthing	8	7	6	7	11	16
South East excluding London (non Metropolitan Authorities)	7	7	8	9	10	10
South East	..	4	4	5	6	6

Notes:

[1] If not all returns were received, percentage calculated from those available.

[2] The standard region comprising Greater London and the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South Eastern regions.

.. Not available. Data for London prior to July 1982 was collected under a different recording and statistical system; information in the form requested is not readily available.

0 = Nil or less than 0·5 per cent.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of homeless households in priority need who were accepted by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east region *(a)* between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, *(b)* between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, *(c)* between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, *(d)* between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, *(e)* between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and *(f)* between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987; and if he will give this information for the south-east region as a whole, and for each local authority in the region.

Mr. Waldegrave: Figures provided by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns appear in the "HIP1 All Items print": copies of these prints for the years 1984 to 1987 are available in the Library and copies of those for 1982 and 1983 will be placed there shortly.

Following are estimates derived from the local authorities' figures:

Households for whom local authorities accepted responsibility for securing accommodation—priority need cases: South-east region[1]

Thousands

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
South-east excluding London (non-metropolitan districts)	11·8	12·1	12·1	12·5	14·0	16·1
South-east	29·7	31·5	34·5	37·8	43·0	46·9

[1] The standard region comprising Greater London and the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South-eastern regions.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make extra resources available to help with the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Waldegrave: For this financial year, we have already offered an extra grant for housing associations providing better interim accommodation for homeless families under the mixed funding initiative.

In addition, my right hon. Friend announced on 3 November that further resources would be made available for local authorities with the most pressing needs to spend this year on projects for families who would otherwise be homeless.

For next year, provision for housing capital spending has been increased by £384 million as compared with previous plans, including an increase in the Housing Corporation's programme to £735 million. The new initiative on mixed funding will also draw on additional private resouces and harness them to the provision of social housing.

Housing Association Tenancies

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total number of households and *(b)* the number of homeless households taking up nominations by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east to secure housing association tenancies (i) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (ii) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (iii) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (iv) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (v) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and (vi) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987; and if he will give this information for the south-east as a whole, and for each local authority in the region.

Mr. Waldegrave: Figures provided by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns appear in the "HIP All items print" for the years 1982 to 1987; copies of the prints for 1984 to 1987 are available in the Library and those for 1982 and 1983 will be placed there shortly.

Following are estimates derived from the local authorities' figures:

Households taking up nominations to secure housing association or new town tenancies by authorities in South East region[1]

Thousands

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
South East excluding London (non-metropolitan districts)						
All	3·8	3·4	2·9	2·5	2·4	2·2
of which homeless[2]	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·3
South East						
All	8·6	7·6	7·3	6·5	6·4	5·7
of which homeless[2]	1·0	1·0	0·8	0·8	1·2	1·2

[1] The standard region comprising Greater London and the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South Eastern regions.
[2] Households accepted as homeless under Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 or Housing Act 1985.
[3] For 1981-82 to 1984-85 including nominations by GLC.

Secure Tenants

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of dwellings let to new secure tenants by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east region *(a)* between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, *(b)* between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, *(c)* between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, *(d)* between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, *(e)* between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and *(f)* between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987; and if he will give this information for the south-east as a whole, and for each local authority in the region;

(2) what was the number of dwellings let by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east to new tenants who were homeless householders *(a)* under secure tenancies and *(b)* under non-secure tenancies between (i) 1 April 1981 and 30 March 1982, (ii) between 1 April 1982 and 30 March 1983, (iii) between 1 April 1983 and 30 March 1984, (iv) between 1 April 1984 and 30 March 1985, (v) between 1 April 1985 and 30 March 1986 and (vi) between 1 April 1986 and 30 March 1987; and if he will give this information for the south-east as a whole, and for each local authority in the region.

Mr. Waldegrave: Figures provided by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme returns appear in the "HIP1 All items print" for the years 1982 to 1987; copies of the prints for 1984 to 1987 are available in the Library and those for 1982 and 1983 will be placed there shortly. Following are estimates derived from the local authorities' figures:

Local Authority dwellings let to new tenants: South East Region[1]

Thousands

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
South East excluding London (non-metropolitan districts)						
Dwellings let to:						
new secure tenants	31·2	31·9	31·5	30·5	30·0	28·6
of which, homeless	6·6	6·6	6·1	6·0	6·9	7·3
homeless households not on secure tenancies	na	na	2·0	2·3	2·5	2·7
South East[2]						
Dwellings let to:						
new secure tenants	78·4	71·6	67·1	61·6	60·9	57·8
of which, homeless	20·4	19·7	19·5	19·7	22·7	23·8
homeless households not on secure tenancies	na	na	2·9	3·9	4·2	4·7

Notes:
[1]The standard region comprising Greater London and the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South Eastern regions.
[2]For 1981-82 to 1984-85 GLC lettings are included.
na = not available.

Peak Park Planning Board

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment of the planning applications made to the Peak park planning board in the last year, how many were successful and how many failed.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1986-87, the Peak park joint planning board granted 596 planning applications and refused 185.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications in the years 1980-81, 1981-82, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 were made to the Peak park planning board; in each year, how many were successful and how many failed; in each year, how many appeals from decisions of the board he received; and how many of those were successful.

Mr. Waldegrave: The available information is given in the two following tables. With the exception of the figures indicated, the information given is published in the annual reports of the Peak park joint planning board (copies of which are in the Library).

Planning applications

Peak Park *Number*

Year	*Applications received*	*Applications decided* *Total*	*Granted*	*Refused*
1980-81	914	822	627	195
1981-82	715	752	612	140
1982-83	779	678	592	86
1983-84	759	735	643	92
1984-85	751	662	536	126
1985-86	721	667	[1]517	[1]150

[1] Figures amended since the publication of the 1985-86 annual report.

Planning appeals

Peak Park *Number*

Year	*Appeals received*	*Appeals decided* *Total*	*Allowed*	*Dismissed*
1980-81	47	36	8	28
1981-82	34	38	4	34
1982-83	22	18	2	16
1983-84	23	23	9	14
1984-85	38	26	9	17
1985-86	[1]49	[1]20	[1]3	[1]17

[1] Figures available since the publication of the 1985-86 annual report.

Basingstoke and Deane

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications from the borough of Basingstoke and Deane have gone to appeal in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the appeals in each year has been successful.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table shows the number of planning appeals received and decided in relation to the Basingstoke and Deane district between 1 January 1984, the earliest date from which information on an individual planning authority basis is available, and 30 June 1987. Decisions issued in a particular year do not necessarily relate to appeals lodged in that year. Some of the appeals received were withdrawn before being determined.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*January-June 1987*
Appeals received	96	92	106	57
Appeals decided	72	101	57	45
Percentage allowed (of appeals decided)	18 per cent.	44 per cent.	35 per cent.	18 per cent.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to increase resources available to local authorities for housing expenditure intended to halt the physical deterioration of housing estates.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is already Government policy to make additional resources available for the renovation of local authority estates. Gross provision for all local authority capital expenditure on housing in 1988-89 will be £3,048 million, an increase of 4 per cent. over this year and the third successive annual increase. This includes £140 million specifically for Estate Action schemes, which is nearly double the current year's provision.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals are currently awaiting his decision.

Mr. Waldegrave: Approximately 11,700 planning appeals are currently awaiting decision by the Secretary of State, or by planning inspectors appointed by him.

Green Belt

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to issue new guidance on development within the metropolitan green belt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain committed to green belt policy as set out in DOE circular 14/84 and our subsequent statements on the use which may be made of redundant farm buildings *(Official Report,* 30 April 1986, column 414) and redundant hospital sites (DOE circular 12/87) without detriment to the green belt.

Darenth Park

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment what representations he has received concerning the proposed redevelopment of the Darenth Park hospital site.

Mr. Waldegrave: Representations have been received from a number of local bodies and residents, including 19 letters supporting the proposal and nine opposing it.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations *(a)* for the creation of new enterprise zones or *(b)* for the extension of existing enterprise zones.

Mr. Trippier: Representations have been received from local authorities, hon. Members and others seeking the designation of new enterprise zones and the extension of existing zones.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to introduce any new enterprise zones or grant extensions to existing enterprise zones.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no statement to make on this at present.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of jobs *(a)* created and *(b)* retained in each enterprise zone since its creation.

Mr. Trippier: The number of jobs that existed in enterprise zones at designation and those that were present at October 1985 are given in the table below. Information as to whether specific jobs at designation were in existence in October 1985 is not available.

	Employment at designation	*Employment at October 1985*[3]
Corby	61	3,600
Dudley	2,671	3,300
Hartlepool	299	1,400
Isle of Dogs	641	2,700
Salford/Trafford	2,254	4,200
Speke	565	700
Tyneside	10,363	9,300
Wakefield	1,196	1,700
Swansea	2,068	3,400
Clydebank	2,825	4,700
Allerdale	397	1,400
Glanford	[1]41	800
Middlesbrough	1,356	700
North East Lancashire	740	1,900
North West Kent	752	2,900
Rotherham	531	1,100
Scunthorpe	[1]41	800
Telford	0	2,200
Wellingborough	32	1,100
Delyn	933	1,300
Milford Haven	[2]1,676	1,900
Invergordon	103	200
Tayside	546	1,000

[1] Data for Glanford and Scunthorpe at designation have been combined to preserve the confidentiality of individual establishments.
[2] Estimate.
[3] Information up to October 1986 will be published shortly.

Rating Reform

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from businesses in the north-west region concerning the proposals for a unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has received several representations from businesses in the north-west. If the unified business rate had been implemented this year, it would have saved businesses in the north-west £180 million, or 18 per cent. of their present rate bills.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely impact of the proposed unified business rate on non-domestic ratepayers in each of the districts in Staffordshire expressed in percentage terms.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) of 29 June at column *44*, which showed the percentage change in non-domestic rates in each district in the event of a move to a national non-domestic rate set at the 1987-88 average. The changes illustrate for Staffordshire districts range from +4·2 per cent. to −1·6 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether recently released mental patients will be liable for the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: Patients released from psychiatric hospitals will cease to be exempt from the personal community charge, unless they fall within any of the categories of exempt person which we have announced.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the formula showing the effect on all local authorities not benefiting from the maximum poll tax safety net of each £1 change in the safety net both upward and downward.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 25 November 1987]:* Areas contributing to the safety net, but below the level of the maximum contribution, are unaffected by the decision to have such a maximum. For each £1 fall in the maximum contribution (for example from £75 to £74), areas benefiting from the safey net would see that benefit reduced by £1 × the adult population of the areas benefiting from that reduction over the total adult population of areas benefiting from the safety net except that no area is required to become a net contributor to the safety net as a result of this calculation.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 19 November on households gaining and losing on the introduction of the poll tax, he will give figures for the estimated amount of money which each of the defined households will lose for the losers and gain for the gainers, giving separate figures for gainers and losers.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 25 November 1987]:* The figures requested are as follows:

Rounded estimates of gains and losses for main household types from full introduction of the Community Charge

	Losers £ million	*Gainers £ million*	*Net gain £ million*
Single pensioners	10	140	130
Other single adults	40	170	130
Two adults	550	660	110
Three plus adults	440	70	−370
Total	1,040	1,040	0

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, columns *483-4*, relating to the transitional arrangements for the poll tax, he will provide an update of his reply on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*, on regional loser and gainer households for the illustrative year 1990-91.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 25 November 1987]:* The figures requested are as follows. They have been produced on the same basis and are subject to the same qualifications as those I gave the hon. Member on 26 October at column *38*.

England only

Impact of the introduction of community charge in 1990-91 with £75 maximum safety net contribution
Dual running in Inner London and Waltham Forest only
(assuming no change from 1987-88 spending levels)

	Northern	*Yorks & Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*Greater London*	*South East*	*South Western*	*West Midlands*	*North Western*	*England*
	('000)s	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*	*('000s)*
Pounds per week										
LOSERS										
10+	1	5	2	1	12	7	2	4	3	37
5—10	26	33	31	13	67	118	29	49	58	426
2—5	175	268	216	83	293	511	198	249	334	2,328
1—2	129	217	158	70	302	424	168	205	207	1,880
0—1	304	514	360	225	605	769	375	454	531	4,138
Total losers	636	1,037	767	392	1,279	1,830	772	961	1,133	8,809
GAINERS										
0—1	362	521	403	213	574	808	374	515	652	4,423
1—2	98	163	137	66	192	364	152	178	202	1,553
2—5	139	186	173	78	229	592	199	239	303	2,139
5—10	25	66	30	23	59	176	44	68	99	588
10+	7	3	6	3	11	37	9	12	10	97
Total gainers	631	939	749	383	1,066	1,977	778	1,012	1,266	8,800
Percentage of net income										
LOSERS										
10+	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	4
5—10	3	2	1	—	1	4	—	1	4	18
2—5	66	107	82	31	109	212	69	105	140	921
1—2	182	268	200	88	275	488	201	258	287	2,247
0—1	385	660	485	273	894	1,126	501	595	701	5,620
Total losers	636	1,037	767	392	1,279	1,830	772	961	1,133	8,809
GAINERS										
0—1	390	604	475	245	666	1,090	473	606	735	5,282
1—2	153	175	164	77	226	512	174	212	292	1,984
2—5	75	144	99	56	139	313	114	166	201	1,306
5—10	12	15	10	4	31	56	16	26	33	202
10+	2	1	2	1	4	6	1	2	4	25
Total gainers	631	939	749	383	1,066	1,977	778	1,012	1,266	8,800

Rivers (Purity)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which rivers in England are wholly or partly within the lowest category of wholesomeness.

Mr. Moynihan: The river quality survey 1985 showed that about 2 per cent. of total river length in England was classified as being of bad quality—class 4—which is the lowest category in the national classification scheme. Three quarters of these rivers are in the older industrial areas of the north-west and Yorkshire, and major schemes of improvement are underway. The Government's policy is for upgrading of all remaining class 4 rivers.

I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the map which shows the location of rivers within this classification. Further details are contained in the survey, copies of which are available in the Library.

Houses of Parliament (Emergency Heating)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that in the interests of safety, when emergency heating has to be introduced into any part of the Houses of Parliament or its outbuildings, that it is electric and thermostatically operated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Existing electric circuits in buildings can carry only a limited load which severely restricts the use of electric heaters in an emergency.

Bird and Wildlife Sanctuaries

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that important bird and wildlife sanctuaries located in gravel pits, are not used for housing development.

Mr. Moynihan: Each case must be considered on its merits, but we have already issued advice to local authorities, emphasising the importance of taking full account of the needs of nature conservation in considering development proposals affecting important wildlife sites. This is contained in DOE circular 108/77, which is currently being revised. I expect shortly to issue updated advice.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is in a position to make a statement about the development plans of the Merseyside development corporation on the Wirral side of the Mersey; if he will detail the size of the Merseyside

development corporation's budget for the next three years; and what proportion of this is expected to be spent on developments in the Wirral.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The development plans of the Merseyside development corporation for its Wirral development area relate, primarily, to the reclamation of 114 acres of derelict dockland for industrial, commercial and residential purposes. In order to progress these plans, the corporation needs to own the land. It has announced today that agreement to purchase has now been reached with the landowners, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. I welcome this agreement. I hope it will lead to the early regeneration of this area. To this end an increasing proportion of MDC's spending will be devoted. Their estimated annual expenditure is shown in the table. Staff, office and estate management costs are excluded.

Year	*Total MDC expenditure (£ million)*	*Wirral Designated Area (£ million)*	*Per cent.*
1987-88	25·2	3·8	15
1988-89	25·1	6·5	26
1989-90	21·0	5·3	25

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Land

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North, on 13 November, if in the light of the fact that his Department has already provided information on the acreage of land held in the Norwich district health authority area, he will list in league order, with the highest at the top, the acreage of land held in those district health authority areas within the National Health Service in England about which he has readily available information centrally; and if he will also give the total.

Mrs. Currie: The figures provided on 13 November for the major property by the Norwich health authority, were obtained from a special scrutiny of that authority's land terriers. Smaller sites were, as now, excluded. A table follows which includes the available information from authorities who have returned aggregated information for their major sites in the format requested. It is estimated that the total site area is 51,000 acres.

District	*Acres*
Leicestershire	1117
Northumberland	805
Norwich	625
Tunbridge Wells	612
North Staffordshire	588
East Surrey	578
Huddersfield	546
North East Essex	531
West Berkshire	519
South Derbyshire	519
Dartford and Gravesham	519
Barking and Havering	509
Portsmouth	482
Newcastle	479
Leeds West	450
Sheffield	447
Southampton	445
Oxfordshire	445
Chichester	440
Wakefield	432
Central Nottinghamshire	410
Basingstoke	398
York	395
Walsall	395
Waltham Forest	390
East Suffolk	388
Bromsgrove and Redditch	388
Croydon	378
East Yorkshire	366
Eastbourne	356
North Warwickshire	343
South East Staffordshire	338
Leeds East	336
South Birmingham	334
Northampton	334
Bath	334
South Tees	329
Canterbury and Thanet	326
Kidderminster and District	316
Hull	299
North Lincolnshire	294
Mid Downs	289
Nottingham	284
Mid Surrey	284
Barnet	277
East Berkshire	267
East Cumbria	254
Sunderland	252
Southend	252
Bexley	250
West Surrey and North East Hants	247
Bradford	247
North West Surrey	242
South West Durham	240
South Warwickshire	237
Merton and Sutton	237
Gateshead	237
Brent	237
Worcester and district	232
Hillingdon	232
Cambridge	230
West Dorset	215
Basildon and Thurrock	212
Riverside	208
Redbridge	208
Doncaster	205
Swindon	200
North Beds	200
Aylesbury	200
East Dorset	198
Durham	198
Dudley	198
Mid Essex	195
Airdale	195
North Derbyshire	193
Wandsworth	185
South West Herts	183
Solihull	180
Darlington	178
Bromley	178
South West Surrey	173
Maidstone	173
Paddington	168
Bloomsbury	168
North West Herts	166
Isle of Wight	166
West Cumbria	163
South Beds	163
Brighton	163
Rotherham	161
Mid Staffs	161
Hounslow	153
West Essex	148
Hampstead	148
North Herts	143

District	Acres
Coventry	143
Harrow	141
Enfield	141
Central Birmingham	141
Wolverhampton	138
Kingston and Esher	133
Medway	131
Lewisham and North Southwark	131
Salisbury	128
West Suffolk	126
Winchester	121
Peterborough	119
Greenwich	116
West Birmingham	106
Harrogate	106
Sandwell	104
Kettering	104
Great Yarmouth	104
South East Kent	99
Herefordshire	99
South Cumbria	91
North Birmingham	89
Haringey	84
West Norfolk	82
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	82
North Tyneside	79
East Herts	77
Worthing	74
Calderdale	74
Barnsley	74
North West Durham	72
Newham	72
Milton Keynes	72
Ealing	72
Huntingdon	69
Pontefract	67
West Lambeth	64
Scunthorpe	64
Hastings	64
Dewsbury	64
North Tees	62
South Tyneside	57
Scarborough	57
City and Hackney	52
Wycombe	47
Hartlepool	44
Northallerton	42
Tower Hamlets	37
Islington	37
Rugby	25

In-Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about in-vitro fertilisation research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) today.

Community Hospitals

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy towards community hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: Small community hospitals make an important contribution to the National Health Service. It is, however, for each health authority to determine the appropriate pattern of district services. In doing so they will balance the benefits of well used community hospitals alongside those of larger district hospitals in the light of changing circumstances and so as to secure the best possible value and level of service provision for all the local communities they serve.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the number of retirement pensions payable in 1988-89 to male and female persons aged 75 years or over and to those aged 80 years and over; and how many of the latter are expected to qualify for an increased level of income support on account of their age.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that about 1·3 million men and 2·5 million women over 75 will be receiving retirement pension in 1988-89. Of these, about 580,000 men and 1·4 million women recipients will be over 80. The figures include recipients of non-contributory retirement pension, and relate to individuals.

It is also estimated that there will be about 490,000 recipients of income support with the over-80 pensioner premium in 1988-89. The figures relate to claimants and may represent either single people or couples.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of pensioners male and female, currently receive less than the basic state retirement pension on account of incomplete contributions; and what percentage receive an uplifted pension at or exceeding 125 per cent. of the basic on account of additional, graduated or earnings-related contributions.

Mr. Scott: As at September 1986, 3·7 per cent. of men received less than the standard rate of retirement pension because of incomplete contributions. 11·2 per cent. of women received less than the appropriate standard rate of pension because of defects in their own or their husband's contribution record. I regret that the other information requested is not held in that form, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Beds, Norwich

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of National Health Service beds available in hospitals under the control of Norwich health authority in each of the years 1960, 1970, 1972, 1975, 1980 and 1987.

Mrs. Currie: I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks. Due to restructuring in 1974, comparable figures for earlier years requested are not available. 1986 is the latest year for which figures are available.

NHS hospitals activity in Norwich District Health Authority

	Year		
	1975	*1980*	*1986*
Available beds	3,965·1	3,979·2	3,452·5
In-patient cases	41,173	53,075	62,726
Day cases	523	5,084	5,895
Total out-patient att.,	182,217	245,009	286,737
Throughput	10·4	13·3	18·2

Over the period the number of in-patient cases treated increased from 41,173 in 1975 to 62,726 in 1986. This represents an increase in the number of in-patient cases treated per available bed from 10·4 to 18·2.

London Hospitals

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the cost per in-patient week for each of the London postgraduate hospitals in each of the last three financial years.

Mrs. Currie: The costing returns submitted to the Department show the average costs per in-patient week as follows:

Hospital	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Hospital for Sick Children	1,262·28	1,456·28	1,629·82
Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children	1,049·86	1,061·66	1,196·24
Hospital for Nervous Diseases	954·10	1,246·96	1,167·04
Moorfields Eye Hospital	992·00	1,122·64	1,260·65
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley	556·08	597·98	618·73
Brompton	1,363·59	1,474·36	1,680·34
Brompton Frimley (1)	595·36	—	—
London Chest	1,000·62	1,104·77	1,231·79
National Heart	1,774·80	1,853·80	1,910·04
Royal Marsden	969·18	981·90	1,015·23
Royal Marsden Surrey	826·15	917·73	865·27
Hammersmith	920·37	939·45	1,014·47
Acton	288·90	287·31	313·99
Queen Charlottes Maternity	1,025·40	974·40	1,152·62
Chelsea Hospital for Women	751·29	830·95	1,056·42
Eastman Dental (2)	—	—	—

Notes.
(1) This hospital closed in December 1984.
(2) This hospital had no in-patients during the period.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the revenue allocations to the special health authorities for the London postgraduate hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the table.

Revenue Cash Limits[1]

£1000s

Special Health Authority	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*[2]1986-87*	*[3]1987-88*
Hospital for Sick Children	27,183	27,541	28,775	31,244	33,503
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	15,088	15,692	16,333	17,452	18,166
Moorfields Eye Hospital	11,055	11,615	12,135	12,938	13,557
Bethlem Royal and the Maudsley Hospitals	15,598	16,351	17,312	17,736	20,202
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	24,232	26,121	26,124	29,316	30,257
The Royal Marsden Hospital	17,212	18,345	18,695	20,828	21,527
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospitals	[4]39,209	39,179	40,566	43,425	45,668
Eastman Dental Hospital	4,157	4,444	4,761	5,090	5,296

Notes:
[1] Inclusive of all in-year adjustments, carry forward from previous financial year, and in-year transfers between revenue and capital.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Initial allocations shown. Final cash limits will reflect in-year adjustments (see Note [1]) which have not yet been finalised.
[4] The Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's hospitals were governed by separate health authorities in this year; combined revenue cash limits are shown.

Alternative Medicine

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish a committee under section 4 of the Medicines Act 1968 so that he may have competent advice on alternative medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Under the Medicines Act the Medicines Commission has a statutory duty to make recommendations to Ministers regarding the number and functions of section 4 committees. The existing structure of statutory committees has been established following its advice and I understand that the commission has no plans at present to recommend the appointment of any additional committee.

Towers Hospital, Leicester

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recommendations of the report of the Health Advisory Service concerning the Towers hospital in Leicester.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the Health Advisory Service has not yet produced a written report on the recent visit to Leicestershire. It is the responsibility of the district health authority concerned to consider what action should be taken on any recommendation.

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of privately owned homes for the elderly in Brighton, Hove, Worthing, Bournemouth, Eastbourne, Chichester, Lewes and Clacton; what percentage of residents in these homes have their payments for being there mainly or wholly met by his Department; and if he will give the average weekly sum per resident.

Mr. Newton: Information on the number of private homes is available only on the basis of social services authority areas. As at 31 March 1986 the counties containing the districts mentioned had the following numbers of private residential care homes for elderly people:

	Number
East Sussex	304
West Sussex	267
Dorset	269
Essex	162

Further information about private homes is available in "The Directory of Private Hospitals and Health Services" a copy of which is in the Library. Information about the proportion of residents in these homes in receipt of supplementary benefit and the average weekly payment is not available.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is his intention to introduce regulations whereby the local social services department would be obliged to give a view on the suitability of an elderly person to enter a privately owned home where further funding will be required for that person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The joint central and local government working party on public support for residential care considered whether people entering residential care and requiring support from public funds should have their need for care assessed by local authorities. Decisions on the working party's report will be considered in the context of the work of Lady Wagner's group on the role of residential care and Sir Roy Griffiths' wider examination of the use of resources in relation to community care, both of which should be completed early next year.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the inspection of all privately owned homes for use by the elderly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Central, Fife (Mr. McLeish) on 24 November.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount paid out weekly per resident by his Department to owners of privately owned homes for the elderly on behalf of residents.

Mr. Portillo: Where the resident is entitled to supplementary benefit help with the fees, payment is made to the resident himself and not to the home owner, except where, very exceptionally, payment is received by the owner because either the resident cannot manage his own affairs and there is no one else to act for him, or the resident has fallen into arrears with his fees and direct payment is the best way to safeguard his accommodation. In May 1987, the latest date for which information is available, the average weekly payment of supplementary benefit to those elderly people in receipt of supplementary benefit in residential care and nursing homes was £107·13.

Home owners also receive payments made by local authorities in respect of sponsored residents.

Infant Mortality

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the infant mortality rate within the first year of birth for each year from 1981 to 1986 in each regional health authority area in England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Infant mortality rates (deaths under one year of age per 1,000 live births) for England and Wales, and usual residents of Wales and regional health authorities—1981 to 1986

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
England and Wales	11·1	10·8	10·1	9·5	9·4	9·6
Area of usual residence						
Wales	12·6	10·6	10·7	8·8	9·8	9·5
Northern regional health authority	10·7	10·4	10·2	9·4	8·4	9·8
Yorkshire regional health authority	12·6	11·5	11·3	10·7	10·7	10·6
Trent regional health authority	10·9	10·5	10·3	9·1	8·6	9·9
East Anglian regional health authority	9·8	9·4	9·0	8·2	9·4	8·1
North West Thames regional health authority	10·3	10·2	8·8	8·6	9·0	8·6
North East Thames regional health authority	10·4	11·0	9·6	9·3	8·5	9·3
South East Thames regional health authority	11·4	9·8	9·4	9·9	9·5	8·6
South West Thames regional health authority	10·4	10·7	8·7	8·5	9·1	8·8
Wessex regional health authority	11·4	10·3	10·1	9·7	9·0	9·1
Oxford regional health authority	8·2	9·8	9·3	8·5	8·2	9·0
South Western regional health authority	10·4	10·1	9·8	8·5	8·5	9·5
West Midlands regional health authority	11·7	12·0	10·8	11·2	10·5	10·0
Mersey regional health authority	11·3	10·5	9·3	8·0	8·9	9·4
North Western regional health authority	11·1	12·1	11·3	10·0	9·6	10·7

Ambulances

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline the average expenditure per mile paid by each area health authority towards the use of an ambulance.

Mrs. Currie: The information for 1985-86 is available on pages 164-166 of the Department's publication "Health Service Costing Returns", copies of which are held in the Library. Information for 1986-87 is not yet available.

Hospitals (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations have been received

regarding recent cuts in hospital services in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members about the measures recently announced by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority to enable it to keep within its budget. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 October at column *179*.

Nurses (Special Duty Payments)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any study has been conducted to establish the likely effects of cuts in special duty payments to nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council, the body responsible for negotiating nurses' terms and conditions of service, is carrying out a review of allowances for patterns of working, including special duty payments. As part of this review, data have been collected for the council on hours worked and special duty payments received by nurses, midwives and health visitors.

Manchester Royal Eye Hospital

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to make additional resources available to Central Manchester health authority so as to reduce waiting lists at Manchester royal eye hospital.

Mr. Newton: The funding of Central Manchester district health authority is a matter for the North Western regional health authority. The hon. Member may, therefore, like to write direct to the chairman of that authority. For 1988-89 we are making £30 million available to regional health authorities to assist them to reduce the time people wait for hospital treatment.

Adjudication Officers

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he or the chief adjudication officer has taken or intends to take to ensure that adjudication officers comply with the Social Security Commissioner's direction in decision no. R(U) 4/87 that they should abandon their old habit of virtually automatically imposing the maximum period of disqualification when a person has been ruled to have left or refused employment without good cause.

Mr. Portillo: On 23 September 1987 the chief adjudication officer issued a memorandum to adjudication officers (RAO 65/86) which drew attention to the increase in the maximum period of disqualification from six weeks to 13 weeks. Among other things the memorandum stated:

"3. This increase in the maximum penalty for voluntary unemployment means that it is now particularly important that AOs should exercise a proper judicial discretion when deciding the appropriate period of disqualification, and should be able to justify that decision in the event of an appeal to the SSAT. The guidelines laid down in R(U) 8/74 should continue to be applied, ie:

(a) The statutory authorities have a complete unfettered discretion, provided it is exercised judicially, no matter which part of Sec 20(1) is under consideration.

(b) It is wrong to say that the only two possible approaches to deciding the period of disqualification are by starting at the maximum and working down, or by starting at the minimum and working up.

(c) It is not correct to say that the maximum period should be imposed unless the claimant proves that there are mitigating circumstances. R(U) 17/54, and any other decision adopting the same line, should not be followed in this respect. (This point should be borne in mind when reading Commissioners' decisions which pre-date R(U) 8/74.)

(d) The correct approach is to regard each case as one in which a sensible discretion has to be exercised in such manner as the justice of the case requires. All the circumstances must be taken into account."

The duration of periods of disqualification is covered in paragraph 89023 of the adjudication officers' guide and this paragraph is in the process of being amended to refer to commissioner's decision R(U) 4/87. Copies of the reported decision, including the headnotes, will be issued to adjudication officers as soon as it has been published. Training courses for adjudication officers include reference to the subject.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, under the proposed income support regulations, adjudication officers will still have the power to disregard the value of a claimant's former home for such period as is necessary for the completion of its sale.

Mr. Portillo: In income support the value of a property occupied by a claimant as his home will continue to be disregarded whether or not it is for sale. However, in the context of such a scheme, it is not considered appropriate to continue to disregard a substantial capital asset in the form of a property which a claimant owns but does not occupy as his home. We consider that a person should look to raise a loan against the equity of the property from a bank or other commercial source rather than have recourse to state benefit.

Social Fund Commissioner

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services for how many days per week Mrs. Rosalind Mackworth will work as Social Fund Commissioner; and what remuneration she will receive.

Mr. Scott: Two days a week; £14,600 per annum.

NHS Staff

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the speech therapists employed in the National Health Service are in (i) grade B and (ii) grade C.

Mr. Newton: These grades do not exist at present in the National Health Service, but I understand that an offer has been made to the staff side representing speech therapists which would introduce them in a new structure. Staff side is consulting its members about the offer.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest salary scales on offer to teachers of *(a)* physiotherapy and *(b)* speech therapy in National Health Service employ.

Mr. Newton: The pay of physiotherapy teachers employed in the National Health Service is determined following the recommendations of the independent pay review body for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine. The current salary scales effective from 1 April 1987 range from £13,060 per annum to £18,950 per annum. An offer to teachers of speech therapy, worth £11,916 to £16,137 in 1987-88 is under consideration by the staff side. The offer also includes a commitment to a special review of teaching grades.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentages and what numbers of physiotherapists are employed by the National Health Service at grade principal I.

Mr. Newton: The number of physiotherapist grade principal I whole-time equivalents employed by the National Health Service is 20 which represents 0·2 per cent. of the total physiotherapy staff.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage and absolute number of speech therapy teachers employed by the National Health Service who are graded at principal I.

Mr. Newton: There is one speech therapy teacher employed in the National Health Service who is graded at principal I, representing 6·7 per cent. of the total number of speech therapy teachers employed by the National Health Service.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the percentages of *(a)* speech therapists and *(b)* physiotherapists in National Health Service employ who have (i) undergraduate and (ii) part-graduate degrees.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Benefits (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of retirement pensioners in Liverpool in receipt of supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement who receive assistance through housing benefit with charges for heating, hot water, cooking and lighting.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not available, but I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 24 November 1987.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled claimants in Liverpool he estimates will receive a lower entitlement under income support than they currently receive.

Mr. Scott: None. Under our proposals for transitional protection, claimants whose benefit entitlement on the introduction of the income support scheme would be less than their existing benefit entitlement will have their benefit level maintained.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children in Liverpool are currently in receipt of free school meals; and how many he estimates will lose this entitlement from April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that on the latest information (for October 1986) over 27,000 pupils in Liverpool schools were receiving free school meals. Of these 3,200 were from families receiving family income supplement and 4,700 were receiving free school meals under the exercise of the local education authorities' discretionary power. These two groups will cease to be entitled to free school meals from April 1988.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Liverpool claiming supplementary benefit were in receipt of the heating addition for each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88; what amounts were involved in each case; and what provision will be made to cover these costs after April 1988.

Mr. Scott: I regret that no information is available concerning the number of people in Liverpool claiming supplementary benefit who were in receipt of a heating addition nor of the amounts involved for the years requested. The amount of money spent on heating additions has been included in the resources for the new income support scheme. Extra help will be directed more effectively through the premiums at those in greatest need —pensioners, sick and disabled people and families.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants of housing benefit in Liverpool he estimates will receive lower benefit from April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost to his Department for the next four years, respectively, of increased payments of housing benefit arising from the proposals for rents outlined in the White Paper "Housing: the Government's Proposals for Scotland".

Mr. Portillo: Any estimates of the effects of these proposals on benefit expenditure made at this stage would be purely speculative.

Health Authorities (Surplus Land)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he places any restrictions on the use made by health authorities of funds raised by the sale of their surplus land; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Our present policy is that proceeds from sales should be retained by the district health authority which initiated the sale and reinvested in the local health service. On occasions proceeds, or part of them, may be retained by regional health authorities, for example if the sale was made possible by the provision of new capital funded facilities—when the region may wish to recoup its capital outlay — or if the proceeds are unusually large.

Tobacco-related Deaths

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the total number of deaths which are caused each year as a direct or indirect result of tobacco smoking.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 12 November at column *280*.

Warnock Report

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to publish a White Paper on matters raised on the Warnock report on human fertilisation and embryology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper, "Human Fertilisation and Embryology: A Framework for Legislation" (Cm. 259) is published today. This sets out the Government's proposals for legislation on the range of issues covered in the 1984 Warnock report. We are committed to introducing legislation in this Parliament. The aim of the Government's proposals is to make it sufficiently flexible to meet the concerns people have about the new reproductive technologies, while recognising the benefits they can bring.

The White Paper describes the alternative draft clauses on embryo research—one banning it, the other allowing it under strict controls—on which Parliament will have a free vote when the Bill is introduced. Even if the principle of embryo research is accepted by parliament, certain areas of research, including genetic manipulation of the embryos and creation of hybrids would be prohibited under the proposed legislation.

We have accepted the principal recommendation in the Warnock report that a statutory licensing authority independent of Government, should be set up to regulate certain infertility treatments including in-vitro fertilisation and artificial insemination by donor; and, if Parliament permits it, research involving human embryos. The SLA would have a lay chairman and a membership with wide-ranging interests, including substantial lay representation. Those wishing to carry out IVF, AID and other regulated treatments will need, by law, a licence from the SLA.

As the Warnock report recommended, the Government have already banned commercial surrogacy agencies—and now propose to make clear in law that surrogacy contracts are unenforceable in the courts. We do not at present propose to extend the criminal law any further in this field of surrogacy, but intend that the SLA should be asked to examine the practice of surrogacy so that Parliament can review the situation from time to time on the basis of informed advice.

The White Paper makes proposals on a wide range of other issues including the storage of human gametes and embryos; counselling of couples undergoing treatment; the legal status of children born as a result of gamete or embryo donation and the provision of information to children born of these techniques.

I hope right hon. and hon. Members will have an opportunity to debate the White Paper proposals early in the new year.

Single Payments

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will announce the restoration of supplementary benefit single payments for travelling expenses to attend the funeral of a close relative.

Mr. Portillo: We have today laid regulations[1] before Parliament for this purpose.

[1]The Supplementary Benefit (Single Payments) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1987.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those district health authorities which have made contractual arrangements with private hospitals so far in 1987.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 20 November 1987]:* This information is not yet available. We expect to have it by the end of August 1988.

Foster Children

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to the changing of a child's surname by its foster parents, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* I would expect foster parents of a child in care to seek the local authority's agreement before calling the child by a different name and that as a matter of good practice this would usually be discussed with the child's family. A formal change of name, for example, by deed poll would only be made with the agreement of the parents or, if the parental rights were vested in the authority, by leave of the authority. Where a child is a ward of court, a change of name by which a child is known may properly be regarded as a step in the child's life for which the court's approval is necessary even where the child has been committed to the care of a local authority.

Low Calorie Diets

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects to publish the report on low calorie diets by the working party of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Health; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will institute an inquiry into the circumstances in which the report on low calorie diets by the working party of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Health was leaked to the press before official publication by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* We hope to publish the report "The Use of Very Low Calorie Diets in Obesity" from the chief medical officer's committee on the medical aspects of food policy (COMA) before the Christmas recess. The disclosure to which my hon. Friend refers took place many months ago and involved an early draft of the report prepared some three months previously. Inquiries at the time suggested that it had occurred accidentally.

Moss Side Hospital

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether patients held in seclusion in Moss Side hospital are held in accordance with the normal procedures for secluding patients.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* When patients are cared for in seclusion on clinical grounds, this is done in accordance with the normal procedures.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for resolving the industrial dispute at Moss Side hospital.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The hospital authorities are continuing discussions with the Moss Side branch of the Prison Officers Association to secure a return to normal working.

Dental Examinations

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce patient charges for routine dental examinations.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's statement to the House on 25 November, and to the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cmnd. 249).

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 27 November 1987

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tobacco Duty

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to which EEC member states currently operate cigarette duty rates higher than those generally prevailing in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of total EEC cigarette sales, sales in those member states represent.

Mr. Lilley: One member state, Denmark, applies a higher level of excise duty to cigarettes than the United Kingdom. It is estimated that the volume of cigarette sales in Denmark represent less than 1½ per cent of total cigarette sales in the Community.

Building Societies

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recommendation he has received from the Building Societies Commission on the building societies' request that the limit on their wholesale funds be raised; and what decision he has made.

Mr. Lilley: The Building Societies Commission has considered the submission put to it by the Building Societies Association and accepts the case made for an increase in the limit on wholesale funds. The commission accepts that the present limit adversely affects the ability of building societies to compete for mortgage business with other financial institutions which have no restrictions on their acceess to wholesale funds. The limit is at present a constraint on the operation of only a few societies, but it hinders the planning of many more. Although the submission from the association only proposed an increase in the limit to 30 per cent., the commission has concluded that it would be right in the circumstances to raise the limit direct to 40 per cent., the maximum permitted by the 1986 Act. Setting the figure at 40 per cent. now should give societies a more certain basis for their longer-term planning.

In addition to observing the statutory limit, each society is already required to agree with the Building Societies Commission an operatonal limit on its wholesale funding. That limit is set after taking account of each society's management expertise and systems and the types of funding instrument used. That system will continue.

I have agreed that Treasury consent be given to the necessary order which will be laid before the House shortly. That order will also give effect to a number of minor changes to the definition of wholesale funds requested by the Building Societies Association.

PRIME MINISTER

Electronic Data Systems

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department is responsible for vetting applications by Government Departments to purchase equipment from Electronic Data Systems.

The Prime Minister: Each Department is responsible for its own purchasing decisions subject, where appropriate, to financial approval from the Treasury.

Security (Discussions)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Prime Minister whether there have been any (i) contacts or (ii) discussions between any of the security services and *(a)* the Provisional Irish Republican Army, *(b)* the Official Irish Republican Army; *(c)* the Ulster Volunteer Force, or *(d)* any other paramilitary or terrorist organisation in Northern Ireland since 1979.

The Prime Minister: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to give information on any matters relating to the operations of the security and intelligence services.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received urging him to take legal action against drug companies following the announcement of Her Majesty's Government's new measures of support for haemophiliac AIDS sufferers.

The Attorney-General: None.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government propose to seek powers in the Legal Aid Bill to remove or alleviate the present effects on the conduct of the financial aspects of divorce cases of the Law Society charge on the former matrimonial home; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Primary legislation is not necessary to adjust the operation of the legal aid statutory charge. The Government have already announced their intention to amend the regulations governing the statutory charge in legally aided cases to allow the charge to be postponed where a lump sum is awarded to the legally aided person for the purchase of a new home at the end of matrimonial proceedings, and to provide for simple interest to be levied on all postponed charges. These amendments will be introduced as soon as possible. The Government do not intend to make any other changes to the provisions governing the legal aid statutory charge which provides an important discipline to the conduct of litigation under the legal aid scheme.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total amount of legal aid authorised by Legal Aid Office No. 4 (South-Western Area) in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* the last available year for which information is available.

The Attorney-General: The payment of civil legal aid bills is administered centrally and the amounts attributable to certificates issued by individual legal aid offices could not be ascertained without incurring disproportionate expense. The information available for the south-western area relates to legal advice and to criminal legal aid, and is as follows:

£ million

	1980-81	*1983-84*	*1986-87*
Legal Advice	2·034	4·096	6·618
Criminal Legal Aid	2·564	4·043	6·203

Legal advice includes assistance by way of representation and, for 1986-87, advice under the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme. The figures for criminal legal aid cover magistrates' court proceedings only and include, for 1986-87, payments under the magistrates' courts duty solicitor scheme.

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General why the Union Flag was not flown at the court room in Armagh City on Remembrance Sunday 8 November 1987; and if he will make arrangements to have it flown on all appropriate dates.

The Attorney-General: The Union Flag was flown at Armargh courthouse on 8 November 1987, but through oversight was not hoisted until approximately 11.15 am, contrary to standing instructions which require the flag to be hoisted at 8 am and remain up until sunset. The courthouse is in possession of standing instructions for the flying of flags on all appropriate dates.

EMPLOYMENT

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will amend the name of the newly reconstituted National Council for Vocational Qualifications so that its name reflects the fact that its geographical area includes more than one nation.

Mr. Cope: No. I am satisfied that the term "National" used in such a context is commonly understood to cover more than one nation within the United Kingdom.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund

Mr. Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government policy on the European Commission's proposed changes to the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund intended to redirect investment and marketing to structurally backward regions.

Mr. MacGregor: As required by article 23 of the Single European Act, the Commission has proposed a framework of general policy and financial principles to govern the operations of the three Community structural funds, of which EAGGF guidance section is one. The Commission identifies five priority objectives for the funds: the objective mainly relevant to the guidance section is, with a view to reform of the common agricultural policy, the speeding up of the adjustment of agricultural structures and the promotion of the development of rural areas. The guidance section would also have a role in a further objective, that of promoting the development and structural adjustment of the less-developed regions. No specific changes in the various measures financed at present from the guidance section have yet been proposed by the Commission: the Government's attitude to any such proposals would depend on their likely consequences for the United Kingdom.

Mobile Food Hawkers

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to amend the Food Act 1984 to enable local authorities to revoke the registration of a mobile food hawker who in the opinion of the local authority causes a nuisance to the population in the area in which he operates; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

Officials have been asked to consult interested organisations to consider revision of the Food Act 1984. However, registration of food hawkers by local authorities under that Act is concerned solely with food hygiene.

Local authorities have general powers to deal with nuisances under part III of the Public Health Act 1936 if they consider that the activities of any trade or business are prejudicial to the health of, or a nuisance to, inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Contaminated Soil

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department took with regard to the importation of 800 tonnes of contaminated soil from Holland at the Port of Mostyn, why the consignment was eventually allowed into the country and dumped near Rossett in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* Imported soil must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate confirming freedom from plant pests and diseases. In this particular case, special information was obtained from the Dutch Plant Health Authority to ensure that the consignment came from an industrial site and that there was no risk of it being infected with Rhizomania, a soil-borne disease of sugarbeet. The Ministry's plant health and seeds inspectorate checked that the waste soil did not come into contact with agricultural land and that it was safely transported and buried.

Milk

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quantities of milk supplied to each local education authority on which an EEC subsidy was claimed during the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* Quantities of school milk on which EC subsidy was claimed by local education authorities and local authorities in Great Britain are recorded by school year, not by financial year. During the 1985-86 school year the quantities were as follows.

Quantities of whole milk for which subsidy was claimed by local education authorities for the school year 1985-86 (all figures in gallons)

	Gallons
Avon	417,136·56
Barking	58,210·59
Barnet	37,797·70
Barnsley	143,359·53
Bedfordshire	177,057·90
Berkshire	235,258·99
Bexley	75,082·69
Birmingham	267,171·93
Bolton	142,985·18
Bradford	189,036·45
Brent	163,340·59
Bromley	66,827·77
Buckinghamshire	59,141·38
Bury	32,822·10
Calderdale	78,737·93
Cambridgeshire	8,952·46
Cheshire	108,014·00
Cleveland	130,021·45
Coventry	12,955·40
Cornwall	44,537·92
Croydon	115,937·99
Cumbria	129,010·39
Derbyshire	426,954·41
Devon	296,474·14
Doncaster	111,890·33
Dorset	205,804·93
Dudley	31,404·81
Durham	110,436·59
Ealing	19,581·48
Enfield	38,554·54
Essex	49,925·72
Gateshead	93,744·63
Gloucestershire	204,764·08
Hampshire	130,119·29
Haringey	160,520·98
Harrow	24,597·64
Havering	58,618·79
Hereford and Worcester	307,854·61
Hertfordshire	330,115·41
Hillingdon	24,357·85
Hounslow	96,308·24
Humberside	157,326·51
ILEA	1,425,925·40
Isle of Wight	38,225·35
Kent	469,165·58
Kingston on Thames	12,091·35
Kirklees	135,721·24
Knowsley	114,499·26

Quantities of whole milk for which subsidy was claimed by local authorities for the school year 1985-86 (all figures in gallons)

	Gallons
Ackworth	12,135·00
Bath	25,885·23
Bentham	4,700·92
Blackburn	2,541·21
Bracknell	21,000·24
Brewood	nil
Bristol	17,112·42
Cotton	3,526·99
East Cambridgeshire	3,600·36
North East Derbyshire	2,678·83
Erewash	nil
Forest Heath	157·50
Fordbridge	3,523·72
Fylde	3,961·43
Gosfield	1,742·52
Great Budworth	112·63
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,697·66
Harborough	995·50
Harlow	46,528·34
Kensington and Chelsea	4,982·21
Kingshurst	nil
Lancaster	6,466·50
Lichfield	7,850·51
Northavon	8,426·91
Ribble Valley	17,294·28
Rutland	nil
Stafford	8,354·25
East Staffordshire	18,660·50
Stanway	nil
Thurrock	32,348·27
Wandsdyke	9,049·93
Wandsworth	2,970·77
Westminster	6,295·05
Winsford	10,092·00
Woodspring	16,401·34
Wrekin	36,340·40
Wyre	18,574·36
West Lancashire	2,088·22
Wales	
Connah's Quay	7,722·12
Sealand	1,400·51
IAPS[1]	892,076·79

[1] Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bannock Report

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken following the publication of the Bannock report about commercial representation overseas.

Mrs. Chalker: The Bannock report ("Bringing More Manufacturers into Active Exporting"), concerning inter alia the extent of untapped potention amongst smaller and medium sized firms, was commissioned by the British Overseas Trade Board.

In the light of the report, the Department of Trade and Industry, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is examining ways in which some of the United Kingdom's official export promotion services can be refined, to meet more effectively the needs of small and medium sized firms.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Programme

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the applicability of currently proposed changes to the community programme in Britain to the operation of similar schemes in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I wish to give careful consideration to the applicability in Northern Ireland of the Government's proposals for a new programme for the long-term

unemployed, including changes in the community programme, and conclusions will be announced as soon as possible.

Apprentices

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his projection for the intake of apprentices over the next five years; and if he will provide a breakdown by trades.

Mr. Viggers: This is primarily a matter for the Northern Ireland Training Authority and the industry training boards which have informed me that the information is as follows:

Projected apprentice intake in Northern Ireland 1988-89 to 1992-93

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Catering					
Cookery	20	20	20	20	20
Clothing					
Sewing machine mechanics	7	7	7	7	7
Knitting machine mechanics	2	2	2	2	2
Cutters	11	11	11	11	11
Construction					
Joiners	456	456	456	456	456
Bricklayers	276	276	276	276	276
Plasterers	96	96	96	96	96
Painters	108	108	108	108	108
Slaters/Tilers	12	12	12	12	12
Wood machinists	32	32	32	32	32
Electricians	120	120	120	120	120
Plumbers	80	80	80	80	80
Distributive[1]	—	—	—	—	—
Engineering					
Electrical Fabrication Mechanical	275	300	300	325	325
Food and drink					
Mechanical/Electrical engineering	3	3	3	3	3
Fitters	2	2	2	2	2
Motor mechanics	3	3	3	3	3
Painters/Joiners	2	—	2	—	—
Plant bakers	12	12	12	12	12
Home bakery apprentices	40	40	40	40	40
Butchers	70	70	70	70	70
Textiles					
Maintenance fitters	4	4	4	4	4
Electricians	2	2	2	2	2
Loom overlookers	5	5	5	5	5
Road transport					
Light vehicle mechanic	800	800	800	800	800
Heavy vehicle mechanic	100	100	100	100	100
Light vehicle body repair	200	200	200	200	200
Electricians	30	30	30	30	30
Parts/Stores	20	20	20	20	20
Agricultural mechanics	100	100	100	100	100
Other industries					
Printers	15	15	15	15	15

[1] No information available.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to ensure that Harland and Wolff maintains a design facility capable of catering for future orders without relying on subcontracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Maintenance of the design facility at Harland and Wolff is a commercial matter for the company and will be dependent on what future orders can be secured.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his projection of the numbers of employees in Harland and Wolff over the next five years.

Mr. Viggers: Future employment levels at Harland and Wolff are dependent on the company's ability to secure orders on a commercial basis. The company is seeking new orders but, like all other European shipyards, faces a highly competitive world market.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Companies Registration Bureau

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will institute criminal proceedings against the Companies Registration Bureau of Companies House, PO Box 59, Nantwich, Cheshire.

Mr. Maude: There have been a number of complaints about the activities of this bureau, and I understand that a man has been charged with criminal deception; he is due to appear before Crewe and Nantwich magistrates on 15 January 1987.

W H Smith and Octopus

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider referring to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the announcement by W H Smith and Octopus that they are setting up a joint book merchandising company.

Mr. Maude: The joint venture proposed by W H Smith and Octopus may qualify for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under the provision of the Fair Trading Act. If it is considered to qualify the Director General of Fair Trading has a duty to advise my right hon. and Noble Friend on the question of reference.

Japan (Trade Negotiations)

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the conclusion of trade negotiations with Japan following the accession to the Community of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Alan Clark: When Spain and Portugal acceded to the Community in 1986 the revision of the Community's common customs tariff led to negotiations under article XXIV:6 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade with certain trading partners who were affected by that revision. In the case of Japan, the reduction of tariffs and progressive removal of other trade barriers in Spain and Portugal significantly improves the access of Japanese goods to the Community. After protracted negotiations, it has been agreed that in return Japan will grant to the Community a package of tariff reductions and market-opening measures on items of particular but not exclusive interest to Spain and Portugal. This agreement was approved by the Council of Ministers on 24 November. Although the British Government considered the Japanese offer inadequate a majority of member states was prepared to except it. A decision was urgent because appropriate tariff rates on items of interest to Japan had to be included in the Community's common customs tariff, as amended in accordance with the new harmonised system of goods classification, in time for this to come into effect on 1 January 1988. In the view of the Commission, negotiations with Japan could not be further prolonged. The Government judged that it was in the interest of the United Kingdom that a decision should be taken to conclude them.

I greatly regret that it was not possible for the House to complete scrutiny on this occasion.

TRANSPORT

Accident Statistics (Theddingworth)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the accident record in the last five years for the village of Theddingworth, Leicestershire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Theddingworth is situated on the A427, a local road. Information on the accident record may be obtained from the highway authority, Leicestershire county council.

A427 (Designation)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will designate the A427 as a trunk road for that section of the road which runs between Lutterworth and Market Harborough.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The proposed M1-A1 link, a new trunk road, will serve the movement of longer distance traffic in that area. Work on that scheme is expected to start during 1988.

London Underground (Fires)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of the London Fire Brigade reports on each station on the London Underground for the current year and previous years.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am arranging for the most recent reports of the inspections undertaken by the London Fire Brigade (Fire Prevention Branch) and the Chief Fire Inspector of London Underground Limited on each deep-level tube section and station of the London Underground system to be placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Prisons (Suicides)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers, location and status of self-inflicted deaths in Scottish penal institutions for each year from 1983 to the present; and how many of those were on suicide observation at the time of their death.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of self-inflicted deaths of inmates in Scottish penal establishments were six in 1983, five in 1984, six in 1985 and seven in 1986. Details of the establishment and status of the inmates in these instances were as follows:

Establishment	*Status of inmate*
1983	
Barlinnie	Untried
Barlinnie	Convicted
Edinburgh	Convicted and sentenced
Glenochil Young Offenders Institution	Convicted and sentenced
Longriggend Remand Unit	Untried
Peterhead	Convicted and sentenced

Establishment	Status of inmate
1984	
Barlinnie	Untried
Barlinnie	Untried
Barlinnie	Untried
Edinburgh	Untried
Glenochil Detention Centre	Convicted and sentenced
1985	
Barlinnie	Untried
Barlinnie	Convicted and sentenced
Barlinnie	Convicted and sentenced
Glenochil Detention Centre	Convicted and sentenced
Glenochil Young Offenders Institution	Convicted and sentenced
Perth	Untried
Peterhead	Convicted and sentenced
1986	
Barlinnie	Convicted and sentenced
Barlinnie	Convicted and sentenced
Barlinnie	Untried
Cornton Vale	Untried
Edinburgh	Untried
Perth	Convicted and sentenced
Perth	Convicted and sentenced

In these 24 cases, 12 individuals were subject to observation or other precautions at the time of death and 12 individuals were not.

In 1987 there have been 11 deaths in Scottish penal establishments. The death of any person in legal custody is the subject of a fatal accident inquiry. So far, fatal accident inquiries have been completed for only two of the deaths in 1987 and in each case the cause was acute myocardial ischaemia and not self-inflicted injury. Determinations of fatal accident inquiries are still awaited in the other nine cases.

Remand Statistics

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of accused persons remanded in custody, for each year from 1985 to the present, principally on the grounds that they were of no fixed or unsatisfactory abode at the time of their remand.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that this information is not available.

Fines Enforcement Officers

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers and location of fines enforcement officers; and if he has any plans to increase their numbers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fifteen fines officers are in post in the Scottish court service. The sheriff courts at which they are based and the number of each court are as follows:

	Number
Aberdeen	1
Airdrie	1
Dundee	1
Dunfermline	1
Dumbarton	1
Edinburgh	2
Falkirk	1
Glasgow	3
Hamilton	2
Kilmarnock	1
Paisley	1

This scheme is currently being evaluated by the Scottish Home and Health Department, and in the light of the results I shall consider whether it might be extended.

Private Medicine (Debt)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail for each year since 1973 the average level of debt owed to the National Health Service by the private medicine sector *(a)* in the Strathclyde region and *(b)* in the Clydesdale area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not available centrally.

Wages

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, at 1987 prices (i) the full-time average wage for men and (ii) the full-time average wage for women in Scotland for each year since 1979, giving the percentage change between years.

Mr. Lang: The following information has been derived from the new earnings survey, conducted by the Department of Employment in April each year.

Average gross weekly earnings of adult full-time employees in Scotland whose earnings for the survey pay-period were not affected by absence

	Males aged 21 and over	Females aged 18 and over
(i) *At April 1987 prices*[1]		
1979	189·7	113·2
1980	189·6	115·0
1981	192·4	119·7
1982	194·1	119·3
1983	202·3	125·6
1984	208·4	126·8
1985	206·8	127·2
1986	*212·8*	*134·8*
1986[2]	209·8	135·3
1987[2]	214·6	139·9
(ii) *Percentage change since previous year*[3]		
1980	−0·1	+1·6
1981	+1·5	+4·1
1982	+0·9	−0·3
1983	+4·2	+5·3
1984	+3·0	+1·0
1985	−0·8	+0·3
1986	+2·9	+6·0
1987[2]	+2·3	+3·4

[1] The constant price estimates have been made using the retail prices index.

[2] These relate to full-time employees on adult rates, as 1987 figures for males aged 21 and over, and females aged 18 and over, are not yet available.

[3] Owing to the size of sample used in the survey all the annual figures are subject to sampling error, and the rates of growth may be particularly affected.

Oil Industry

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the oil industry in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information given on numbers of employees is taken from the census of employment:

(a) Extraction of Mineral Oil and Gas in Scotland
September 1981—17,500
September 1984—19,600

(b) Mineral Oil Processing in Scotland
September 1981—3,400
September 1984—3,000

Information is not available for other years since 1979.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of his budget for assistance to industry in each year since 1979, at 1987 prices.

Mr. Lang: Gross expenditure on the items now forming part of my right hon. and learned Friend's industry programme in each year since 1979-80, at 1986-87 prices is as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	324·6
1980-81	365·6
1981-82	378·3
1982-83	561·2
1983-84	382·6
1984-85	347·6
1985-86	351·1
1986-87	388·0
[1]1987-88	296·8

[1] Estimated.

YTS

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage of YTS leavers in Scotland going into full-time paid employment within one month of leaving the scheme for each year for which records are available; and what proportion obtained paid work in the sector in which they were trained.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the form requested. Of those who left YTS in Scotland in the period April 1985 to March 1986 47 per cent. were in full-time paid employment three months after leaving the scheme and in the period April 1986 to March 1987 46 per cent. were in full-time paid employment three months after leaving the scheme; 24 per cent. and 23 per cent. respectively of all YTS leavers were employed by the companies in which they trained.

Industrial Production and Construction

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the index of industrial production and construction figures for Scotland for each quarter of each year since 1977.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is shown in the table:

Index of industrial production and construction, Scotland (1980 = 100)

Year	*Quarter*			
	1st	*2nd*	*3rd*	*4th*
1978	107·1	108·9	106·1	106·7
1979	102·9	107·8	107·7	107·2
1980	104·6	101·4	98·5	95·8
1981	95·8	94·5	95·0	96·4
1982	96·2	96·7	96·8	96·1
1983	95·3	94·9	96·9	98·6
1984	99·3	98·1	99·3	100·2
1985	103·0	104·3	104·1	103·6
1986	100·0	99·7	101·2	101·6
1987	[1]98·6			

[1] Provisional.

School Expulsions

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has as to how many pupils have been excluded or expelled from more than one school in 1986 and 1987;

(2) what information he has as to how many expulsions or exclusions took place in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Scotland in 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of those involved on the YTS in Scotland move straight into jobs.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* Information is not available in the form requested. Of those who left YTS in Scotland in the 14-month period to May 1987 (the latest figures available) 49 per cent. were in jobs three months after leaving the programme.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cervical Smear Test

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting period for the result after a woman has undergone a cervical smear test within the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: Information on which to calculate the average waiting period is not collected centrally.

The target for all health authorities is a turn-around at the laboratory within one month. I understand that most districts are meeting this target and that no district in Yorkshire region has a backlog exceeding five weeks.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total number of schizophrenic sufferers in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Portillo: I regret I do not have information on which to base an estimate.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plan to lower the qualifying age for eligibility for the mobility allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no present plans to do so.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of hospital beds *(a)* available and *(b)* occupied in England and Wales for the years 1985 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: The requested information is given in the table for England.

The health services information steering group (chaired by Mrs. Körner) recommended in its first report that bed use data should include all patients using a ward in a 24-hour period and that aggregated bed occupancy statistics should not be used as an indicator of efficient bed use. A more useful measure of bed utilisation is patient throughput per available bed. For instance, in 1985 and 1986 respectively 19·5 and 20·3 in-patient cases were treated per available bed compared with 15 in 1979.

Statistics for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

National Health Service Hospitals in England

	1985	*1986*
Average daily number:		
available beds	325,487	315,714
occupied beds[1]	263,960	254,597

[1] Bed occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not therefore reflect the use of beds by patients who do not stay overnight.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people and the number of dependants covered thereby claiming housing benefit in 1979 and the latest available date; and if he will distinguish whether these payments are made for tenants in the public sector, the private sector or for payment with rates.

Mr. Portillo: Figures for the number of people receiving housing benefit in the years requested are given in the table. I regret that detailed information is not kept of the number of people who make a claim for housing benefit, nor of the numbers of dependants in claimant households.

Housing Benefit Recipients: Great Britain

	(thousands) *1979-80*	*1986-87*
Rent rebates (for public sector tenants)	1,205	3,745
Rent allowances (for private sector tenants)	220	1,190
Rate rebates	3,065	7,120

Notes:

1. Housing benefit was not introduced until 1983. It replaced the former DOE rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebate schemes, and additionally brought in those who formerly received help for their rent and/or rates through supplementary benefit, who therefore do not appear in the 1979 total.
2. The 1986/87 figures are derived from local authority mid-year subsidy claims and are subject to revision.

Benefits (Western Isles)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of pensioners, unemployed, single parents and chronic sick in the Western Isles entitled to supplementary benefit but not claiming; and what is the average amount unclaimed per week by each of these groups.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Pay Beds

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to the National Health Service of each pay bed; and how much of that cost is received by the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The cost of individual pay beds varies considerably according to local factors, but since charges are set so as to recover the average full cost of pay beds, the charges themselves are the best available indication of pay bed costs. Although a small number of health authorities determined their own charges for 1987-88, the majority adopted a central list of charges, which was as follows:

1987-88 Charges for Private Resident Patients

	Daily charges to patients not paying consultant(s) separately		*Daily charges to patients paying consultant(s) separately*	
	Single room £	*Other accommodation* £	*Single room* £	*Other accommodation* £
Class A (Long-stay Hospitals)	83	75	78	71
Class B (Psychiatric Hospitals)	70	64	66	60
Class C1 (Mainly Acute and other hospitals in non-teaching districts)	138	125	129	118
Class C2 (Acute and other hospitals in non-teaching districts)	157	142	147	134
Class D (Hospitals in London teaching districts (other than hospitals in Classes A and B)	219	199	205	187
Class E (Hospitals in provincial teaching districts (other than hospitals in Classes A and B)	174	158	164	149

	Daily charges to patients not paying consultant(s) separately		Daily charges to patients paying consultant(s) separately	
	Single room	Other accommodation	Single room	Other accommodation
	£	£	£	£
Class F (London Postgraduate teaching hospitals managed by Special Health Authorities (other than hospitals in Class G)	238	217	224	204

Claimants (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to help claimants in Liverpool claim their full benefit entitlement following the findings of the Liverpool Association for the Disabled that 58 per cent. of disabled people were underclaiming benefit entitlement by an average of almost £20 a week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There is a steady growth in the numbers receiving disability benefits and we shall continue our efforts to improve advice and information about the benefits available.

Norwich DHA

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the names and salaries of each of the officers on the main board, other senior officers, and all unit officers of the Norwich district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. Health authority officers are employees of the individual authority concerned and my hon. Friend may like to approach the acting chairman of Norwich district health authority.

Mobility and Attendance Allowances (Carlisle)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance have been made in the Carlisle constituency in 1985-86 and 1986-87, and how many have been rejected.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Hospital Patients (Carlisle)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each year since 1979, how many patients discharged from hospital in the Carlisle constituency area have been re-admitted again suffering from the same complaints or illnesses which had led to their original admission.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. Many conditions which persist over a long period may need repeated interventions. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of East Cumbria health authority, who may be able to provide the information he requires.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish information on the number of claims for supplementary benefit from people required to be available for employment made in the three-month period before 5 October 1986, showing how many of these claims were initially abated as a result of the operation of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, together with a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of these initial disqualifications that were for less than six weeks, *(b)* the number that were later reviewed and the disqualification lifted or altered and *(c)* estimates of the proportions that fell under each of the heads *(a)* to *(d)* of section 20(1);

(2) if he will publish information on the number of claims for supplementary benefit made in the three-month period after 5 October 1986, showing how many of these claims were initially abated as a result of the operation of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, together with a breakdown showing *(a)* the number of these initial disqualifications that were for less than 13 weeks, *(b)* the number that were later reviewed and the disqualification lifted or altered and *(c)* estimates of the proportions that fell under each of the heads *(a)* to *(d)* of section 20(1).

Mr. Portillo: The number of claims for supplementary benefit from people required to be available for employment actually made in any given period is not available, but the number of such claims processed during the period in question is as follows:

	Number
12 week period ending 23 September 1986	1,264,222
12 week period ending 16 December 1986	983,959

Information on the number of awards initially reduced pending a decision under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 and the outcome of later reviews is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gloucestershire Health Authority

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that the resources allocation working party system produces an equitable distribution of funds to Gloucestershire health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Allocation of resources to Gloucester health authority is a matter for the South-Western regional health authority. We have no grounds for supposing that regional allocation policies are inequitable.

Child Additions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the size of the child additions to *(a)* short-term and *(b)* long-term national insurance benefits in 1978-79 and currently; and if he will express changes in percentage terms.

Mr. Portillo: The following table sets out the rates of child dependency additions and the percentage changes

since April 1978. The additions payable with short-term benefits were abolished with effect from 26 November 1984.

	Long-term benefits		*Short-term benefits*	
	Rate (£)	*Index*	*Rate (£)*	*Index*
April 1978	6·10	100	2·20	100
November 1978	6·35	104	1·85	84
April 1979	5·35	88	0·85	39
November 1979	7·10	116	1·70	77
November 1980	7·50	123	1·25	67
November 1981	7·70	126	0·80	36
November 1982	7·95	130	0·30	14
November 1983	7·60	125	0·15	7
November 1984	7·65	125	—	—
November 1985	8·05	132	—	—
July 1986	8·05	132	—	—
April 1987	8·05	132	—	—
April 1988	8·40	138	—	—

Diabetic Diets

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence and representations he has received as to costs of a diabetic diet to low-income families, especially in respect of diabetic children; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Currie: Representations have been received from the British Diabetic Association and from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed and other hon. Members concerning the future of the diet allowance for diabetics on supplementary benefit. Under the new income support scheme, which comes into effect in April, there will be no special dietary addition. However, many diabetics will be entitled to a special premium on account of long term sickness, disability or old age. As the British Diabetic Association acknowledged, a diabetic diet need be no more expensive than an ordinary diet.

Blood Glucose Monitoring Strips

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent discussions he has had about the possibility of making blood glucose monitoring strips available to diabetics on National Health Service prescription.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 24 November.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the diagnosis and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Currie: Since 1 September, there have been 12 letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents and 23 letters from members of the public. All of these have been or will be assured that the National Health Service recognises and treats this disease. As the symptoms of myalgic encephalomyelitis resemble those of other forms of debilitating illness, it is not easy to diagnose single cases or draw up diagnostic guidance; nor is it the Department's policy to advise the medical profession on clinical practice.

National Insurance and Social Security Operations (Computerisation)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what staff saving he estimates would result from purchase of a computer system for national insurance and social security operation; what are the running costs of such a system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: It would be impracticable to attempt to quantify savings or running costs in the absence of specific plans or proposals to purchase such a computer system. The Department's operational strategy, which is developing the social security computer system, estimates staff savings of around 16,000 from 1992-93; with running costs of the system estimated at £45 million per annum at today's prices.

Haringey Health Authority

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider removing the chairman of the Haringey health authority from his position on account of his handling of the health authority both financially and organisationally and the state of his local knowledge as a non-resident of Haringey.

Mrs. Currie: No.

Benefit Claimants (Correspondence)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to reply to the inquiries dated 1 October, 22 October and 10 November from the hon. Member for Easington in respect of Mrs. Jones of 43 Longnewton Street, Dawdon, Seaham and her claim for attendance and mobility allowance.

Mr. Portillo: I wrote to the hon. Member yesterday.

Drugs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to investigate the activities of pharmaceutical companies prescribing drugs for the National Health Service which have been fined by the United States of America's Food and Drug Administration for convening drug regulations.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 November at column *561*. It is not licensing authority policy to give details of any action it may take in specific cases.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what checks are being carried out by the Committee on Safety of Medicines or his Department to ensure that all side effects, including deaths, which are known to a pharmaceutical company are reported to the committee; on how many occasions it has been found that a company has not made a complete report; and what action is taken in such circumstances.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* Power under the Medicines Act 1968 and its subordinate legislation is used to make it a condition of the grant of a product licence that the licence holder must report to the licensing authority, in accordance with standard directions, adverse reactions associated with the medicinal

product immediately they come to notice. Licence holders have been reminded of this requirement on a number of occasions in Medicines Act information letters, and given detailed guidance on reporting: the most recent guidance, MAIL 49 issued in March 1987, is in the Library. When the safety of a marketed drug is under particular scrutiny the licence holder may be asked to provide all information known to the company about adverse drug reactions. Information provided in response to such a request is compared with previous reports made by the company, and any discrepancies are investigated. Where the licensing authority is satisfied that the licensing conditions have been breached, the action open to it can include the suspension, revocation, or variation of the licence where safety or other relevant factors apply. The Department is currently conducting two investigations which relate to the possible failure to disclose serious suspected adverse drug reactions. Because information on suspected under-reporting is held on files relating to specific products and giving the full licensing history, a count of earlier possible instances cannot be made without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines carried out any investigation into the circumstances surrounding Eli Lilley's failure to report deaths attributed to Opren to the United States of America's Food and Drug Administration;

(2) whether Eli Lilley gave any indication to the Committee on Safety of Medicines prior to the launch of Opren that the drug would cause particular problems for elderly people taking it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* I am advised that as both the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Licensing Authority are involved in current legal actions concerning Opren, related matters are sub-judice.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of new evidence that pharmaceutical companies providing drugs for the National Health Service have tried to prevent doctors from making critical comments about the company's drugs in court actions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* If the right hon. Member has any evidence that a criminal offence (such as conspiracy to pervert the course of justice) has been committed, I hope he will bring it to the attention of the police.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had any communication with his counterparts in *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* France or *(c)* the Federal Republic of Germany about recent evidence that plutonium from the safeguarded reprocessing plants in the European Economic Community has been sold on the black market in Khartoum, Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the hon. Member for Meironnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 19 November at columns *617-18*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether bilateral or international atomic energy agency safeguards have been applied to all plutonium originating in Central Electricity Generating Boards or South of Scotland Electricity Generating Board reactors and subsequently exported to the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 21 October 1987 at columns *749-50*.

European Fast Reactor

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for continued United Kingdom investment on European fast reactor collaborative research and development of *(a)* the meeting on 1 December of the European Fast Reactor Consortium partners and *(b)* the plans to privatise the electricity supply industry and their impact on the Central Electricity Generating Board's current investment in the project.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the meeting of the European Fast Reactor Utilities Group on 1 December will discuss proposals from the European design companies for work on a common model. Eventual investment in new collaborative facilities will be considered by the utilities at the appropriate time.

Council of Energy Ministers

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community Council of Energy Ministers on 13 November.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend the Minister of State represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Energy Ministers on 13 November.

The Council adopted a recommendation on measures to encourage, without distorting the market, the exploitation of renewable energy sources in the Community. Ministers noted the Commission's intention to prepare, with the assistance of experts from member states, an international conference in the second half of 1988 which would consider the marketability of renewable energy sources.

The Council agreed conclusions recognising the need to establish procedures for spreading information on the energy efficiency of buildings. Ministers considered the binding nature of a directive as proposed by the Commission inappropriate, but discussion will continue on a possible Council recommendation.

Ministers noted with interest the Commission's intention to prepare a programme for improving the efficiency of electricity use. The programme will be considered next year.

The Council discussed the potential for the conversion of foodstuffs into ethanol for use as a blending component for petrol. There was general support for the Commission's decision not to table proposals on bioethanol since it is clear from technical and economic evidence that development of bioethanol is unjustified.

Lastly, Ministers were unable to agree conclusions on the costs to refiners of complying with environmental legislation. The matter will be considered further.

Office of Gas Supplies

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any changes are to be made to the Office of Gas Supplies running costs limit for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am advised by the Director General of Gas Supply that his office's running costs limit will be reduced by £500,000 from £1,750,000 to £1,250,000, reflecting a more gradual build-up of work load and hence of staff than earlier estimated.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Conservation

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards energy efficiency in the light of the conclusions of the Association for the Conservation of Energy's report, "Regenerating The Inner City: The Energy Dimension", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will ensure all relevant inner city initiatives his Department takes include an energy efficiency dimension within their remit.

Mr. Trippier: The Government are concerned that construction and rehabilitation projects, whether in inner cities or elsewhere, should take account of the need for energy efficiency. The report reinforces this view. Following consultation with, amongst others, the Association for the Conservation of Energy, the Department is considering changes to the building regulations designed to raise standards of insulation.

Rating Reform

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the effect his new unified business rate will have on rate levels for business in inner cities.

Mr. Howard: If the uniform rate poundage had been introduced in 1987-88, non-domestic rates in urban progamme authority areas would have fallen by around £380 million or 14 per cent. The uniform business rate will be a major stimulus to economic development in the inner cities.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from businesses in (i) the London borough of Bexley and (ii) Greater London concerning the proposed national non-domestic rate.

Mr. Howard: I have received more than 3,500 letters about our proposal since June. They are not, however, categorised by subject or their place of origin. I am aware of concern from some businesses in both Greater London and the London borough of Bexley about the implications of a national non-domestic rate, but I believe that the advantages of the statutory guarantee that the business rate will not increase by more than the rate of inflation are increasingly recognised.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce firm details of his plans for a National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to make a further announcement before the end of 1987.

Nuclear Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is proposing to take to ensure that British Nuclear Fuels Limited uses the most modern available technology in relation to the control of discharge arising from nuclear waste reprocessing of Sellafield.

Mr. Moynihan: British Nuclear Fuels plc is already taking account of the best available technology to limit the discharge of radioactive pollutants and is developing further techniques to ensure that the radioactive content of discharges is further reduced in the 1990s.

Basildon

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he used in reaching a decision as to the rate capping of Basildon council.

Mr. Howard: Basildon was selected for rate capping in 1988-89 because its budgeted total expenditure for 1987-88 was 112·3 per cent. above grant-related expenditure. The selection criterion for all the authorities previously selected for 1987-88, including Basildon, was that budgeted total expenditure was more than 12·5 per cent. above grant-related expenditure.

Local Authority Rents

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to prohibit cross-subsidisation between different tenants of one local authority in the setting of rents.

Mrs. Roe: We are still developing our proposals for all aspects of the financial arrangements for local authority housing and these will be the subject of consultation in due course.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update his reply of 20 January, *Official Report*, column 477, to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), and list in the *Official Report* those Acts of Parliament since June 1979 concerning *(a)* local government finance and *(b)* local authority duties, powers and responsibilities.

Mr. Ridley: Five further Acts of Parliament passed this year should be added to update the list set out at columns *476-77* in the *Official Report* of 20 January 1987. They are:

The Local Government Finance Act 1987* (C.6)
The Access to Personal Files Act 1987 (C.37)
The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 (C. 27)
The Rate Support Grants Act 1987* (C.51)
The Local Government Act 1987 (C.44)

I have again marked with an asterisk those Acts wholly or principally concerned with finance.

Mustard Gas (Rhydymwyn)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether his Department has recently

investigated levels of mustard gas remaining at the site of the world war 2 valley plant, at Rhydymwyn in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will describe decontamination procedures carried out at the valley mustard gas plant at Rhydymwyn, Clwyd *(a)* at the time of the plant's closure and *(b)* on subsequent occasions;

(3) whether storage pits containing mustard gas production equipment at the world war 2 valley plant at Rhydymwyn, Clwyd are still in existence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This is the responsibility of the Property Services Agency.

The PSA commissioned the Laboratory of the Government Chemist in October 1985 to carry out a comprehensive survey of the Rhydymwyn site and identify and report on any chemical contamination present.

Any contamination remaining is minimal and the risks involved are no higher than for any site which has been used for industrial purposes.

The pits originally containing mustard gas production equipment were cleared, decontaminated and backfilled after world war 2.

WALES

Dairy Industry

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be meeting the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the future of the dairy industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no plans at present for such a meeting.

Land Authority for Wales

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what acreage of land was bought by the Land Authority for Wales in each district authority area in Wales in each year since its establishment to date;

(2) if he will name all the purchasers of each of the sites which have been sold by the Land Authority for Wales in each year since its inception; at what price each of the sites was sold; and for what purposes the sites were sold;

(3) how much money has been spent by the Land Authority for Wales on the management of each of the sites which are, and which have been, in its ownership since its establishment;

(4) how much was spent by the Land Authority for Wales on the purchase of land in Wales in each year since its establishment.

Mr. Grist: I have asked the chairman of the authority to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Secondary Pupils

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many pupils attended each of the secondary schools in Wales in the school year 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information as at January 1987 is as follows:

Name of school	*Number on roll*
Gwent county council	
Newport St. Julian's comprehensive school	1,215
Newport Duffryn comprehensive school	1,068
Hartridge comprehensive school	1,081
Newport Bettws comprehensive school	1,059
Lliswerry comprehensive school	1,160
Newport Queens comprehensive school	1,020
Brynmawr comprehensive school	573
Bassaleg comprehensive school	1,297
Newbridge comprehensive school	753
Pontllanfraith comprehensive school	855
Glyncoed junior comprehensive school	419
Blackwood comprehensive school	1,016
Llantarnam comprehensive school	1,074
Croesyceiling comprehensive school	1,341
Oakdale comprehensive school	827
Glanyrafon junior comprehensive school	464
Cwmcarn comprehensive school	679
Caerleon comprehensive school	1,202
Monmouth comprehensive school	1,208
Tredegar comprehensive school	1,083
Fairwater comprehensive school	1,330
King Henry VIII comprehensive school	1,394
Chepstow comprehensive school	1,058
Caldicot comprehensive school	1,438
Ebbw Vale senior comprehensive school	887
Risca comprehensive school	774
Abersychan comprehensive school	986
Trevethin comprehensive school	520
West Monmouth comprehensive school	1,085
Nantyglo comprehensive school	921
Abertillery comprehensive school	801
St. Joseph's comprehensive school	1,163
St. Alban's Roman Catholic comprehensive school	655
Gwynedd county council	
Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen	488
Ysgol Botwnnog	456
Ysgol Brynrefail	668
Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle	580
Ysgol Eifionydd	641
Ysgol John Bright	1,143
Ysgol Aberconwy	953
Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones	1,062
Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi	1,558
Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni	1,026
Ysgol David Hughes	1,246
Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern	775
Ysgol Y Gader	328
Ysgol Y Moelwyn	496
Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn	395
Ysgol Y Berwyn	584
Ysgol Ardudwy	609
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy	905
Ysgol Friars	1,172
Ysgol Tryfan	416
Ysgol Y Creuddyn	616
Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen	1,211
Ysgol Glan Y Mor	897
Loreto Roman Catholic Middle School	110
Mid Glamorgan county council	
Afon Taf high school	1,299
Pen-y-Dre high school	1,210
Cyfarthfa high school	1,062
Vaynor and Penderyn	442
Bryn Celynnog comprehensive school	1,438
Coedylan comprehensive school	1,030
Hawthorn comprehensive school	1,123
Mountain Ash county comprehensive school	1,403
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen	1,048
Blaengwawr comprehensive school	656
Tonyrefail comprehensive school	1,232
Cynffig comprehensive school	1,115
St. Cenydd comprehensive school	901
St. Ilan comprehensive school	949

Name of school	Number on roll
Bryntirion comprehensive school	999
St. Martins comprehensive school	777
Maesteg comprehensive school	1,622
Heolddu comprehensive school	928
Ynysawdre comprehensive school	1,171
Lewis boys' comprehensive school	933
Pencoed comprehensive school	1,328
Lewis girls' comprehensive school	1,092
Brynteg comprehensive school	1,694
Porthcawl comprehensive school	1,199
Treorchy comprehensive school	1,479
Ferndale comprehensive school	1,015
Ogmore comprehensive school	828
Porth county comprehensive school	1,028
Ysgol Gyfun Llanhari	932
Rhymney comprehensive school	772
Bedwas comprehensive school	870
Tonypandy comprehensive school	1,217
Y Pant comprehensive school	856
Cymmer comprehensive school	619
Aberdare boys' comprehensive school	913
Aberdare girls' comprehensive school	825
Bedwellty comprehensive school	692
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni	830
Bishop Hedley high school	733
Archbishop McGrath school	443
Cardinal Newman catholic comprehensive school	735
St. John Baptist comprehensive school	691
Powys county council	
Caereinion high school	440
Llanfyllin high school	520
Llanidloes high school	465
Ysgol Bro Ddyfi	353
Newtown high school	1,119
Welshpool high school	1,019
John Beddoes county secondary school	618
Llandrindod high school	781
Builth Wells high school	407
Maesydderwen comprehensive school	733
Brecon high school	986
Gwernyfed high school	572
Crickhowell high school	524
South Glamorgan County Council	
Rumney High	921
Glyn Derw High	526
Cardiff High	1,083
Glan Ely High	979
Willows High	675
Fitzalan High	1,409
Llandedeyrn High	1,073
Cantonian High	1,077
Whitchurch High	1,763
Llanishen High	1,199
Llanrumney High	947
Howardian High	866
Cathays High	783
Llanilltud Fawr Comprehensive	1,004
Barry Boys' Comprehensive	1,584
Bryn Hafren Comprehensive	1,442
Stanwell Comprehensive	979
St. Cyres Comprehensive	1,513
Cowbridge Comprehensive	1,076
Radyr Comprehensive	1,152
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf	992
ST. Illtyd's College	497
Heathfield House Roman Catholic High	620
Archbishop Mostyn Roman Catholic High	645
The Bishop of Llandaff High	1,108
St. Teilo's C.I.W. High	878
Bishop Hannon High	288
Lady Mary Roman Catholic High	929
St. Cadocs Roman Catholic High	449

Name of school	Number on roll
West Glamorgan County Council	
Mynyddbach County Secondary	877
Penlan County Secondary for Boys	820
Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive	1,229
Olchfa Comprehensive	1,797
Morriston Senior Comprehensive	942
Llansamlet Junior Comprehensive	484
Dynevor Comprehensive	551
Pentrehafod Comprehensive	1,136
Bishop Gore Comprehensive	1,472
Cymer Afan Comprehensive	509
Glan Afan	666
Sandfields Comprehensive	796
Dyffryn Comprehensive	926
Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera	837
Penyrheol Comprehensive	987
Gowerton Comprehensive	1,290
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive	820
Cwmtawe Comprehensive	1,647
Llangatwg Comprehensive	1,068
Dwr Y Eelin Comprehensive	1,235
Cwrt Sart Comprehensive	656
Bishopston Comprehensive	931
Dillwyn Llewelyn Comprehensive	732
Pontarddulais Comprehensive	740
Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr	291
Bishop Vaughan Catholic	947
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Comprehensive	751
Clwyd county council	
Hawarden high school	1,031
Rhyl high school	1,30
Mold Alun school	1,500
Elfed high school	1,06
Holywell high school	1,185
St. Davids high school	704
Prestatyn high school	1,469
The Maelor school	520
Castell Alun high school	1,108
Ysgol Uwchradd Maes Garmon	829
Deeside high school	639
Ysgol Glan Clwyd	920
Flint high school	832
Connah's Quay high school	757
Ysgol Bryn Elian	791
Ysgol Emrys Ap Iwan	1,114
Eirias high	904
Denbigh high school	903
Ysgol Dinas Bran	893
Ysgol-y-Grango	839
Brynhyfryd school	984
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd	304
Ysgol Bryn Alyn	886
Darland school	914
St. David's school	1,289
Ysgol Bryn Offa	1,129
Yale sixth form college school	688
Ysgol Uwchradd Argoed	581
Ysgol Rhiwabon	853
The Groves high school	1,068
St. Richard Gwyn high school	1,060
Blessed Edward Jones high school	610
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic high school	511
Dyfed county council	
Llandovery county high school	384
Ysgol Gruffydd Jones	373
Llandeilo country secondary	748
Amman Valley comprehensive school	1,376
Fishguard county secondary school	789
Milford Haven C.S. school	816
Ysgol Dewi Sant	362
Greenhill comprehensive school	1,457
Ysgol y Preseli	677
Milford Haven grammar school	587

Name of school	Number on roll
Pembroke comprehensive school	1,591
Lampeter county sec. comprehensive school	593
Aberaeron comprehensive school	822
Cardigan county secondary school	889
Ysgol Uwchradd Tregaron	369
Penglais comprehensive school	1,044
Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig	548
Coedcae comprehensive school	883
Graig comprehensive school	908
Ysgol Gyfuny Strade	651
Glan-y-mor comprehensive school	754
Bryngwyn comprehensive school	1,049
Sir Thomas Picton comprehensive school	1,162
Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin	600
Queen Elizabeth Cambria comprehensive	704
Queen Elizabeth Maridunum comprehensive	669
Ysgol Gyfun Ddwyieithog Teifi	325
Ysgol Gyfun Emylyn	693
Ysgol Gyfun Ddwyieithog	481
Gwendraeth Valley comprehensive school	691
Whitland grammar school	475
Tasker Milward VC comprehensive school	998
St. John Lloyd Roman Catholic comprehensive school	319

Secondary Schools (Annual Meetings)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has as to the number of annual meetings of parents of secondary school pupils in Wales at which a sufficient number of parents attended in order to constitute a quorum;

(2) what information he has as to how many parents of secondary school pupils attended the annual meeting of each secondary school in Wales held during the school year 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not centrally available.

Advance Factories and Industrial Units

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to allocate two 50,000 sq. ft. advance factories, four 25,000 sq. ft. advance factories, and four 15,000 sq. ft. advance factories at Deeside industrial park, Clwyd; when he proposes to announce his all-Wales allocation of advance factories and industrial units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Plans for advance factories are drawn up by the Welsh Development Agency on the basis of a careful assessment of needs and wide consultation across Wales, and submitted to me for approval. I will announce my decision on the agency's latest proposals in due course. At present eight units totalling 20,500 sq. ft. are vacant and available for letting at the park; and four others totalling 50,000 sq. ft. are currently under construction and due for completion in February 1988.

Electricity Charges

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the cost to the National Health Service of the proposed increase in electricity charges in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The exact price increases for 1988-89 are yet to be fixed by the individual boards. The cost to health authorities will then be affected by their success in improving energy efficiency, for which there is considerable scope.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has made any estimate of the impact of increased electricity charges upon the *(a)* steel and *(b)* chemical industries; what representations he has received from employers' associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Energy, on 3 November. I understand that any increases in electricity prices to industry are not expected to differ significantly from the likely overall average increase of 8 to 9 per cent. but the exact levels of increases have yet to be determined.

I have received no representations from employers' associations.

Conductive Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local education authorities in Wales have approached him concerning conductive education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Merit Awards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was paid in merit awards to dentists and hospital consultants in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales for each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The figures are as follows:

Financial year	Clwyd health authority £	Wales £
1979-80	87,136	834,632
1980-81	167,488	1,351,911
1981-82	188,310	1,485,971
1982-83	159,591	1,597,936
1983-84	162,491	1,841,988
1984-85	151,435	1,974,672
1985-86	169,892	2,273,522
1986-87[1]	176,187	2,617,765

[1] Provisional.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Nationals

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each year since 1978, how many foreign nationals have unsuccessfully applied for residence in the United Kingdom from *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Bangladesh, *(c)* Canada, *(d)* East Africa, *(e)* Hong Kong, *(f)* India, *(g)* New Zealand, *(h)* Pakistan, *(i)* South Africa, *(j)* South America, *(k)* Sri Lanka, *(l)* The United States of America, *(m)* West Africa, *(n)* the West Indies and *(o)* Zimbabwe.

Mr. Renton: The only information available centrally on refusals of such applications is given in the following tables.

Table 1: Persons refused initially[1] an entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom, by country of application

Number of persons

	Bangladesh	*India*	*Pakistan*	*Hong Kong*
1978	3,160	1,570	3,800	n/a
1979	2,580	1,280	4,070	n/a
1980	3,140	1,240	2,790	n/a
1981	3,130	850	2,700	n/a
1982	4,520	1,070	2,700	n/a
1983	5,390	1,380	2,180	n/a
1984	3,710	1,020	1,740	n/a
1985	4,260	980	1,590	40
1986	2,650	1,080	1,360	40

[1] Including those subsequently successful on appeal.

Table 2: British Overseas citizens refused a special voucher for entry for settlement in the United Kingdom, by country of application

Number of persons

Year[1]	*India*	*Kenya*	*Tanzania*	*Zambia*	*Malawi*	*Elsewhere*	*Total*
1982	90	..	10	—	—	..	..
1983	120	60	—	—	—	..	..
1984	90	40	•	•	•	30	170
1985	80	30	•	•	•	40	160
1986	80	60	•	—	—	20	150

Notes:

.. not available.

• 5 or fewer.

[1] Data for years earlier than 1982 are not available centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football Fans

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is contemplating any measures to seek to prevent English football fans from travelling to the European championships in West Germany in June 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The football authorities and interested Government Departments will be discussing appropriate action, including determined action on travel and ticket arrangements, to avoid the risk of disorderly behaviour by England football supporters in West Germany in June 1988. The Department will convene regular meetings of the interested parties.

Indictable Offences (Young Persons)

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentages of males and females respectively aged 14 to 16 years found guilty of indictable offences received custodial sentences in 1986.

Mr. John Patten: This information is given in table 7.11 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1986" (Cm. 233), a copy of which is in the Library.

Video Recordings Act

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted as a result of prosecutions brought under the Video Recordings Act.

Mr. John Patten: The Video Recordings Act 1984 is being introduced in stages, the first of which came into effect on 1 September 1985. The data held centrally, which may be incomplete, show no record of any prosecutions under the Act in 1985 and one person found guilty of an offence under the Act in 1986. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Electoral Roll

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the information gathered for the purpose of compiling the electoral roll requires the gender of the voter; why this information is not included on the electoral roll; and if he will consider changing the law to show the status of voters as Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The electoral registration form, form A, asks for the elector's title (Mr., Mrs. etc.) to be included so as to assist electoral registration officers in identifying peers, who are entitled to register only as local government electors. The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires only the names of electors to be shown in the register, with their qualifying addresses. There is no objection to individual electoral registration officers printing titles as well, but, as this does not assist the conduct of elections, there is no good reason to make it a legal requirement.

Under-age Drinking

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there were in 1986 for under-age drinking.

Mr. John Patten: The information available centrally which may be incomplete, shows 949 defendants proceeded against in 1986 for offences under section 169(2) of the Licensing Act 1964.

Immigration

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his decision to respond

directly to individual constituents regarding immigration cases rather than respond to the constituent's hon. Member.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend indicated to the House on Second Reading of the Immigration Bill (columns 789-790), we do not consider present arrangements for handling hon. Members' representations in immigration cases to be satisfactory and we shall shortly be putting forward proposals for change.

Firearms Working Party

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the firearms working party will report; and whether the report will be made available to the House.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The review of the firearms controls is almost complete and my right hon. Friend hopes to announce his conclusions next week.

Bolton Home Watch

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the work of the Bolton home watch crime prevention scheme.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that two home watch schemes have been established by the local crime prevention project in Bolton and that the project co-ordinator and the police are currently discussing ways of developing more such schemes in the area.

Litter

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy concerning on-the-spot fines for offenders against the litter laws.

Mr. John Patten: We have no objection to on-the-spot fines, provided that the fines do not have to be paid immediately, and provided that they do not create additional enforcement work for the criminal justice services.

Prison Officers

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase the freedom of prison officers to arrange their own rented living accommodation.

Mr. John Patten: Prison officers have had freedom to arrange their own accommodation since 1979. A package of changes in pay and working practices now being introduced in the prison service, which is known as fresh start, provides for prison officers who live in quarters to buy them at a discounted price.

Remand

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many unconvicted prisoners were held on remand on 1 November 1987; what estimate he has made of the corresponding figure on 1 November 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 31 October 1987 about 9,000 untried prisoners were held in prison department establishments in England and Wales. About 900 prisoners, many of whom were likely to have been untried, were held in police cells. Changes in the prison population vary considerably from month to month and it is not our practice to publish short-term projections which may quickly become out of date.

Broadcasting (Scotland)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to meet the chairman of the BBC to discuss the future of radio broadcasting in Scotland.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so. Our Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" suggested that, while there was scope for the development of additional radio services, there was a good case for the continued provision of national regional and local public service broadcasting by the BBC, although it would be for the BBC itself to judge how best to use the resources available to it.

Television Licences

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from pensioners' organisations concerning television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: During 1987, 12 written representations, including one petition, concerning television licences have been received from pensioners' organisations (in five cases referred by hon. Members). On 11 March my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) the then Minister of State, discussed a number of matters including television licences with representations of Pensioners' Voice.

Juveniles (Cautions)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were cautioned in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics of cautions are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" in chapter 5 of the issues for 1985 and 1986 (Cmnd. 10 and Cmnd. 233, respectively), and more detail is given in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 4" (tables S4.1 (C) and S4.1 (D) of the issues for 1985 and 1986). Copies of these are in the Library. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Community Radio

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to be able to make an announcement on the future of community radio in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Our Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities", published earlier this year, welcomed the concept of community radio and offered the prospect of additional radio services at national, local and community level. We shall be in a position to make an announcement about our legislative plans when we have completed our consideration of the responses to the Green Paper.

Immigrants (Bail)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in deciding whether his Department objects to a bail application by an illegal immigrant who is being kept in detention.

Mr. Renton: There is no provision in the Immigration Act for illegal entrants to apply for bail but under schedule 2 to the Act an illegal entrant may be granted temporary release from detention. The criteria applied are whether the illegal entrant will comply with any conditions attached as to residence or reporting and whether there are any compassionate circumstances.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what developments have occurred with regard to the establishment of the home defence headquarters for zone 81, north Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what contingency plans have been made for operating devolved wartime regional government for home defence zone 81, north Wales, in the continued absence of a wartime headquarters for that region;

(3) what assessment has been made of the suitability of the location chosen for the installation of a message switch communications exchange for home defence zone 81 for use as a wartime centre for devolved government; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what has been the cost of maintaining the site designated for the home defence headquarters for zone 81, north Wales, in the financial years *(a)* 1985-86, and *(b)* 1986-87; what are the projected costs for 1987-88; and whether he will describe the nature of refurbishment work conducted at the site.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to give detailed information about individual emergency facilities of this type. No date has been fixed for a start to construction work, and consideration is being given to contingency plans for alternative accommodation in the meantime. In arriving at proposed locations for these headquarters, full account is taken of the need for appropriate communications links.

Firearms

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations govern the storage of guns and live ammunition in the homes of those with permits to keep guns.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Rule 11 of the Firearms Rules 1969 prescribes that the grant or renewal of a firearm certificate is subject to the condition that the firearms and ammunition to which the certificate relates are at all times when not in actual use kept in a secure place with a view to preventing access to them by unauthorised persons. My right hon. Friend has already announced that he intends to extend this requirement to shotgun certificate holders.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to variations between constabularies in restrictions placed on the sale of live ammunition for section 1 firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Chief officers impose a limit on the quantity of ammunition a firearm certificate holder may purchase or possess at any one time, according to the need established.

Disabling Devices

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if any assessment is currently being undertaken by his Department on the effectiveness of devices for stunning armed suspects; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what disabling devices are currently on issue to police forces in the United Kingdom;

(3) what information he has regarding the use of devices designed to stun armed suspects in service or under test by foreign police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from firearms, police forces also have available truncheons, plastic baton rounds, and CS irritants for use in sieges and public order situations. The Home Office scientific research and development branch, and the police service, monitor developments in non-lethal weapons with a view to evaluating any system which might appear to be a practicable, effective and acceptable alternative to conventional weapons. I understand that no such system has yet been identified.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Taser Electronic Immobilisation weapon is currently being tested by the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the type of guns available to the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The type of firearms available to the Metropolitan police are the same as those recommended by the Association of Chief Police Officers joint standing committee on the police use of firearms to all police forces in England and Wales. These are:

(a) revolvers—capable of firing ·38 ammunition
(b) self-loading ·9 mm calibre pistols
(c) rifles and carbines 7·62 mm and 5·56 mm calibre
(d) 12 gauge pump-action shotguns
(e) Heckler and Koch sub-machine guns (for use on anti-terrorist operations)
(f) 7 mm gas dischargers to fire CS gas cartridges
(g) baton round dischargers to fire plastic batons.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 November 1987

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Deputy Secretaries

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and grades of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

Diplomatic Wing

1. Deputy Under-Secretary and Deputy to the Permanent Under-Secretary; and Political Director
   - United Nations; relations with eastern, southern, and western Europe; labour matters and co-ordination of planning.
   - Three Assistant Under-Secretaries and 124 other staff.
2. Deputy Under-Secretary
   - Trade and economic relations, energy, science, space, maritime, aviation and environment; European Community (political co-operation); narcotics control and AIDS.
   - Three Assistant Under-Secretaries and 104 other staff.
3. Deputy Under-Secretary
   - Personnel, finance, communications, office services, overseas estate, protocol, news and information matters; cultural relations; consular, migration and nationality questions; relations with Parliament.
   - Five Assistant Under-Secretaries and 2,576 other staff.
4. Deputy Under-Secretary
   - Relations with all countries in the Americas, Caribbean, Australasia and Asia.
   - Two Assistant Under-Secretaries and 138 other staff.
5. Deputy Under-Secretary
   - Relations with all countries in Africa and the near and middle east; Commonwealth co-ordination.
   - Two Assistant Under-Secretaries and 112 other staff.
6. Deputy Under-Secretary
   - Relations with the Republic of Ireland; arms control, disarmament and defence matters; service adviser and attaches; security co-ordination.
   - Two Assistant Under-Secretaries and 116 other staff.

Aid Wing

Deputy-Secretary
- Bilateral, multilateral and functional aid; overseas manpower services; overseas service pensions.
- Five Assistant Under-Secretaries and 926 other staff.

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to publish a new edition of the treaty of Rome; and if it will include the amendments caused by the Single European Act.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 8 July, at column 149, and 20 July, at column 13. I understand the European Community publications office expects to keep to its schedule for publication this year of a revised consolidated text including the amendments introduced by the Single European Act.

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with the European Community Energy Commissioner and the Director General of Safeguards of Euratom over recent reports that nuclear materials originating in nuclear facilities in the European Community have been illicitly sold on the black market in the Sudan.

Mr. Mellor: There has been no communication on this subject with the EC Energy Commissioner. Some official contact has taken place between the Department of Energy and Euratom which endorses the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 19 November.

Disarmament

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part his Department played in arriving at the detailed arrangements agreed between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics regarding the inspection of the missile bases in the United Kingdom by the Soviet Union as part of the agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Mellor: There have been regular and close consultations between the United States and its allies on all aspects of the INF treaty, including the details of the verification regime.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what reciprocal arrangements have been agreed between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to cover the arrangements agreed for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to inspect at short notice missile bases in the United Kingdom as part of the intermediate range nuclear forces agreement between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America;

(2) if he will publish details of the exchange of notes between the United Kingdom Government and the Soviet Union regarding the arrangements to be made for them to inspect missile bases in the United Kingdom as a consequence of the agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Mellor: The text of the exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union will be laid before the House in the ususal way once the exchange has taken place.

Angola

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs following the European Community's condemnation of the violation of the territorial integrity of Angola by South Africa, what further actions to deter further military aggression in Angola are being taken by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* the United Kingdom's European allies.

Mrs. Chalker: The South African ambassador was called to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 18 November. We supported the declaration by the Twelve on 23 November and United Nations Security Council resolution 602 of 25 November. On all of these occasions South Africa's intervention in Angola was condemned and the immediate withdrawal of its forces demanded.

South Africa

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the speech which Her Majesty's ambassador in South Africa made in Johannesburg on 24 November at the annual Businessmen of the Year Dinner.

Mrs. Chalker: This was an after-dinner speech with no written text and no bearing on policy. I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of Her Majesty's ambassador's most recent policy speech, to the South African/Britain Trade Association on 16 November.

Radiation in Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of that part of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 23 and 24 November which dealt with the subject of radiation levels in food.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) on 25 November, at column 222.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the cases on which the ambassador in Chile or his staff have made direct representations to the Chilean Minister of the Interior, indicating for each whether the intervention was on behalf of another Government.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador and his predecessor in Santiago have spoken to successive Ministers of the Interior as well as to other Ministers and members of the military junta on many occasions about our concern over human rights in Chile. A full list of these representations is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. One intervention, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has been made this year on behalf of another Government. It concerned the arrest and detention of Sr. Luis Tricot.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), *Official Report*, 18 November, column 593, he will list the dates of the meetings held with and the letters delivered to the Chilean authorities on his own behalf and on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Eggar: On 16 September 1987, Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago delivered to the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs an aide memoire expressing concern about Sr. Tricot's arrest and detention. This action was taken formally on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Ireland where Sr. Tricot had refugee status prior to his return to Chile.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the procedure adopted in the allocation of licences for the extraction of fish within the 150 mile fisheries zone surrounding the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: The Falkland Islands Government are responsible for the allocation of fishing licences for the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone. Licences are allocated in accordance with the conservation needs of the fishery and take account of the relative methods of fishing.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the names of those individuals, organisations or companies who have been awarded licences for the extraction of fish within the 150 mile fisheries zone surrounding the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: Details are commercially confidential. Applicants have been notified by the Falkland Islands Government of their squid licence allocations. Finfish licensing is not yet complete. A list of countries allocated licences will be placed in the Library of the House in due course.

Visa Applications

Mr. John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the charges made for visa applications in each of the countries for which visas are required for visits to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The current fees for visit visas or entry certificates are:

	£
Single Entry	20
Multiple entry (normally valid for two years)	40

irrespective of the nationality of the applicant. Fees are payable in the equivalent local currency at the time of application.

Hong Kong

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Minister of State, the Lord Glenarthur, has refused to meet the full delegation from Hong Kong, led by Mr. Martin Lee QC, relating to the Green Paper on representative government.

Mr. Eggar: Lord Glenarthur agreed to receive the Legislative Council members of the delegation in view of the special position of the Legislative Council in Hong Kong. We have no doubt that they will be able to reflect fully and accurately the views of the entire delegation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Degrees

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce legislation to control the use of the description "university" and the issue of degrees in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is already able to exercise control over the use of the term "university" in the name of a company or business by virtue of regulations now having effect as if made under section 29 of the Companies Act 1985 and section 3 of the Business Names Act 1985. Regarding the issue of degrees, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 13 November 1987.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Annual Report)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he has revised the format of Her Majesty's inspectorate's annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Previous annual reports from Her Majesty's inspectorate have been based on evidence gained during the course of just one term. The new style report will offer a view of the nature, quality and effectiveness of education in schools and colleges in the light of all the inspection work carried out by HMI over a whole academic year. It will present an overview on the standards of education in general, on progress made since the previous year's report, on trends and regional differences and on issues that HMI judges need to be addressed by those responsible for the education service. It is hoped that these changes will lead to a better and more useful report.

Deaf-Blind Children

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has yet completed the analysis of the questionnaire on the numbers of deaf-blind children in each local education authority, following the issue of a consultative document in December 1986; and if he has arranged a date to meet representatives of SENSE to discuss the resulting figures.

Mr. Dunn: The analysis of responses to the questionnaire which accompanied the Department's consultative document is not yet complete. Most local education authorities were unable to meet the original deadline for replies. Officials of the Department will arrange to meet representatives of SENSE as soon as work on the analysis is complete and before the final version of a statement on the educational needs of deaf-blind children is issued.

Welfare Officers

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the numbers of education welfare officers in post in England and Wales for each of the last five years for which statistics are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected centrally by my Department or that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Education welfare officers are employed by individual local education authorities.

ENERGY

Sir Frank Layfield (Lecture)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's handlings of large-scale energy projects of the proposals contained in the lecture by Sir Frank Layfield to the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee on 10 November, attended by his officials, concerning the planning inquiry process, and in particular the case for early appointment of assessors, continuity of inquiry staff, and financing of umbrella organisations of objectors; if he will seek to obtain a transcript of the meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's views on major public inquiries were given in the reply to the fifth report of the Environmental Committee, Session 1985-86, "Planning: Appeals, Call-In and Major Inquiries" (Cm 43). A transcript of Sir Frank Layfield's lecture is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member once I have studied it.

"The Energy Dimension"

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response he intends to make to the report by the association for Conservation of Energy on Regenerating the Inner City: "The Energy Dimension", a copy of which he has received.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the letter which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to him on Thursday 26 November. A copy of the letter is being placed in the Library of the House.

Scottish Coalfield

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the planned capital investment in the Scottish coalfield for each year from 1988 to 1993; and what proportion of this will be in opencast mining.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the outstanding debt of the electricity supply industry is attributable to the development and construction costs of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electricity supply industry has borrowed funds when it has not been able to meet its

financing requirements from internal resources. It is not possible to identify the funds borrowed with particular elements of the total financing requirements.

NUM

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of the National Union of Mineworkers; and what matters he discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I met representatives from the Kent area of the National Union of Mineworkers on 17 November, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) to discuss issues arising from the closure of Snowdown colliery.

Scottish Coal Industry

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the planned manpower figures for the Scottish coal industry for each year from 1988 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the costs of refubishing an existing coal fired station; and what is his estimate of the cost of building a comparable new coal fired power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the Hon. Member.

Union of Democratic Mineworkers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and what matters he discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I last met representatives of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers when I addressed its annual conference on 24 June.

Nuclear Power Stations (Building Costs)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the cost of building a new nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 23 November 1987 at column *8*.

Private Mines

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met representatives of private licensed mines and private opencast sites; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have met a number of representatives of the licensed sector. We have discussed the outlook for the licensed sector and the scope for greater flexibility an transparency within the existing law. They have made representations to me about changes they would wish to see in the licensing system.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the external financing limits and outturn figures for the Post Office for each year since external financing limits were introduced.

Mr. Butcher: External financing limits have been set for the Post Office since 1976-77, when they were described as cash limits. The limits and outturn against them have been published in annual public expenditure White Papers and the Post Office's reports and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. However, the information requested is as follows:

	Limit £ million	*Outturn £ million*
1976-77	−24·4	−0·7
1977-78	1·8	−21·5
1978-79	1·2	−16·7
1979-80	−40·5	−34·0
1980-81	−20·0	−7·7
1981-82	0·0	−13·4
1982-83	−55·8	−59·7
1983-84	−50·9	−61·5
1984-85	−60·0	−99·5
1985-86	−70·0	−74·7
1986-87	−93·0	−93·1
1987-88	−57·0	—

The limit for 1988-89 of −£97 million was announced in the Autumn Statement on 3 November.

Radio Investigation Officers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many radio investigation officers there are; how they inspect yacht licences on craft moored offshore; and how many prosecutions there have been in the last five years for infringement of the ship radio (VHF) licence regulations.

Mr. Butcher: The radio investigation service currently has 202 staff. When necessary, the radio investigation service inspects radio installations on craft moored offshore using vessels hired for the purpose, or its own inflatable dinghy. The number of people prosecuted over the last five years for offences related to the use of radio in the marine environment is as follows:

Year	*Prosecuted*
1983	0
1984	0
1985	8
1986	5
[1]1987	10

[1] To 30 September.

All the prosecutions were successful. Information on which of the prosecutions were for infringements of the ship radio (VHF) licence regulations is not readily available.

Cigarettes (West Germany)

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the quantities of cigarettes imported from the Federal Republic of Germany for home use; and what percentage this represents of total cigarettes

delivered for home use in each of the periods April 1985 to September 1985, October 1985 to March 1986, April 1986 to September 1986, October 1986 to March 1987, and April 1987 to October 1987, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: Details of imports of cigarettes for home use only are not available. Total imports from April 1985 are as follows:

Import of cigarettes from the Federal Republic of West Germany 1985 to 1987

Period	*Imports from Federal Republic of Germany (millions)*	*Percentage of total cigarette imports*
April 1985 to September 1985	3,574·8	63·8
October 1985 to March 1986	5,965·8	80·2
April 1986 to September 1986	3,466·6	72·0
October 1986 to March 1987	6,615·3	77·7
April 1987 to September 1987	2,390·1	60·4

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics SITC (R2) Item 122.2.
Notes: Imports valued cif; 1986 and 1987 figures provisional.

Chile (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the Chilean Government officials whom the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) met on his recent trip to Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I had meetings with the Deputy Foreign Minister; the Finance Minister; the Minister of Public Works; the Minister of Mines; the Chief of Staff of the Chilean Navy; the President of the Central Bank; the Executive Secretary of the Foreign Investment Commission. I also attended a lunch hosted by the Foreign Minister. After my arrival in Chile, I was invited to see the President, on whom I paid a courtesy call.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which products he anticipates increased trade with Chile as a result of the recent visit to Chile by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Chilean market offers excellent opportunities for British exporters across a wide range of product areas. In the first 10 months of this year, our exports to Chile were up by over 70 per cent. over the same period last year. I am hopeful that one result of my visit will be that British companies will increase their sales to the Chilean mining sector.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will place in the Library a copy of all press statements from his Department about the recent visit to Chile by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark).

Mr. Alan Clark: A copy of my Department's press notice, announcing the visit, is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) expressed concern about human rights abuses at every meeting with Government officials on his recent visit to Chile; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), raised the question of Chileans formerly resident in Britain and now imprisoned in Chile with any Government officials during his recent visit to Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The purpose of my visit was to promote British exports to Chile. I nevertheless took the opportunity, where appropriate to express Her Majesty's Government's concern about human rights in Chile. Her Majesty's Government have raised with the Chilean authorities the matter of two Chileans, formerly resident in the United Kingdom, who are in prison awaiting trial on arms charges.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the organisations with which the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), held meetings on his recent trip to Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I had meetings with the President and senior officials of CODELCO, the Chilean copper mining corporation; the chairman and officials of the British/Chilean chamber of commerce; the president of FISA (the Santiago International Trade Fair); and the general manager of Minera Escondida Ltd. In addition, I met representatives of the Chilean opposition and an official of the Chilean Human Rights Commission.

EEC (Shipping)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any evidence of the 28 per cent. ceiling on subsidies for the construction of shipping being breached in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Commission is responsible for ensuring that member states observe the rules of the European Council sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding which came into force on 1 January 1987. Under Article 4(5) of the Directive, the Commission can be asked to investigate the aid offered by member states in intra-Community competition. More than 20 such investigations have so far taken place. Only in the case of the Brittany Ferries order has the Commission established a breach of the aid ceiling. An Article 93(2) procedure is now in progress against the French authorities.

Car Lifting Gear

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what actions are being taken to ensure that *(a)* bottle jacks and *(b)* car lifting gear in general meet British safety standards;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the present controls over the safety standards of *(a)* bottle jacks and *(b)* car lifting gear in general;

(3) whether he intends to make further funding available to police the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 in the area of safety standards for car lifting gear.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The Department commissioned the Institute for Consumer Ergonomics to undertake a safety appraisal of DIY car maintenance equipment including car lifting gear. The institute's recommendations were included in the

Department's report on vehicle maintenance, which was published in November 1986. I am arranging for copies of the report to be placed in the Library.

The report has proved a valuable aid to the development of new standards and the revision of existing ones. The British Standards Institution expects to publish new standards for car ramps and axle stands early next year. The BSI has recently issued for public comment a revised draft of BS Au 154(a): 1970 for hydraulic jacks to take account of models intended for use by amateur mechanics. A review of BS Au 172: 1979 for accessory jacks (of both bottle and scissor types) for passenger cars is also being undertaken as a matter of priority. I also indicated my Department's intention to approve standards for the various types of car lifting gear for the purpose of the general safety requirement of the Consumer Protection Act, as soon as satisfactory standards become available. This will mean that suppliers must either comply with the approved standard or achieve an equivalent level of safety by other means.

Enforcement of this legislation is the responsibility of the local authority trading standards departments. The amount allocated to local authorities for expenditure on consumer protection and trading standards activities is reviewed annually during consideration of the rate support grant. The amount allocated for these activities has increased in recent years. The new legislation provides local authorities with greater flexibility and enhanced powers for the execution of their statutory duty to enforce consumer protection laws.

SCOTLAND

Rural Development

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his strategy for rural area development in Scotland; if he intends to establish a rural development agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that rural area development in Scotland is best tackled by supporting and encouraging the initiative and potential which exists in rural communities.

Government assistance for rural development is channelled through a variety of mechanisms, including the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, local authorities and other public bodies. Full details of the wide range of assistance available is provided in the booklet "Rural Scotland" which my Department published earlier this year. We will continue to encourage these bodies to respond to the needs of rural areas in a co-ordinated manner to secure the economic and social development of rural Scotland.

I have no plans to establish a rural development agency. I believe that the interests of rural areas are better served through the existing mechanisms than by the creation of another public body.

Community Service

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide 100 per cent. funding for an expanded community service order scheme in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is at present reviewing the arrangements for providing community service by offenders.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures will be applied to proposals for preliminary investigations of a potential site in Scotland for the disposal of (i) low-level, (ii) intermediate-level and (iii) high-level nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have nothing to add at present to the reply which I gave the hon. Member on 10 November, at column *142*.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate what percentage of nuclear waste produced in Scotland is the result of the production of military materials; and what percentage of such waste is categorised as high level.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available in the form requested. It has, however, been estimated that, for the period to 2030, low and intermediate wastes from defence sources throughout the United Kingdom as a whole would amount to not more than 20 per cent. of the corresponding civil wastes.

Sheep and Goatmeat

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total production of sheep and goatmeat, in tonnes, in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total production of sheepmeat, in thousand tonnes, in Scotland for each year since 1979 is as follows:

	'000 tonnes
1979	52·5
1980	60·8
1981	57·4
1982	56·7
1983	59·7
1984	57·3
1985	57·6
1986	58·4

Little goatmeat is produced, and there is insufficient information on which to base estimates.

Agricultural Land

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the average selling price per acre of agricultural land in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information required is shown in the following table. The data are for equipped farms with vacant possession, sub-divided between hill and upland type farms and other farms.

	Hill and upland type farms £/hectare	*Other farms* £/hectare
1978	588	2,016
1979	1,189	3,034
1980	1,221	2,940
1981	1,241	2,548
1982	1,183	2,784
1983	1,408	3,018

	Hill and upland type farms £/hectare	Other farms £/hectare
1984	1,042	3,020
1985	1,024	2,568
1986	[1]578	2,130
[2]1987	874	1,931

[1] This figure results from an unusually large piece of land sold at a below average price.
[2] To date.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what record he has maintained of land which has been taken out of agricultural use in Scotland since 1979; if he will list in the *Official Report* the total average of land currently in agricultural use in Scotland; and what was the comparable amount in 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The annual June agricultural census provides information on land going out of agricultural use. Between 1979 and 1986 the total recorded was 125,500 hectares. The areas of land covered by the census in 1986 and 1979 respectively were 5,968 thousand hectares and 6,134 thousand hectares. The two series are not completely comparable for a variety of reasons, including corrections and remeasurements.

School Government

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on his proposals regarding school government; and of these how many have been in favour.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 20 November 1987.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for each Scottish health board, the numbers of acute beds in hospitals which are occupied by geriatric and psychogeriatric patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not routinely collected. Relevant information will, however, shortly become available from a special survey. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Educational Buildings (Aberdeen)

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will allow increased capital consents to Grampian regional council to deal with problems of repair and replacement of educational buildings in Aberdeen which have been found to have serious structural faults.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are currently considering how consent to incur capital expenditure in 1988-89 and later years should be allocated, and I will most certainly take account of the problems which have recently materialised in Aberdeen. We expect to complete our deliberations early in 1988. My right hon. and learned Friend cannot give any undertakings about allocations to Grampian regional council at this stage.

Hydroelectricity

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what investment is planned in the hydroelectric industry for each year from 1988 to 1993.

Mr. Lang: This is a commercial matter for decision by the Scottish electricity boards and I am asking the chairmen of the Scottish electricity boards to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Hypothermia

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 5 November, *Official Report*, columns *183-4*, he will give the most up-to-date figures for the numbers of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in Scotland in 1987; and if he has final figures for 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provisional figure for the number of deaths from hypothermia in Scotland in 1987 up to the end of October is 127. The final figure for 1986 is 209.

Highlands and Islands Development Board (Review)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if copies of the review of the Highlands and Islands Development Board are available.

Mr. Lang: Copies of the summary report are now available in the House Library and copies have been sent to all hon. Members with constituencies in the board's area. Copies of the full report will be lodged in the House Library shortly.

Private Sector Rented Dwellings

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many additional private sector rented dwellings he expects to achieve as a result of the proposals on his recent White Paper on housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* A considerable number.

Housing

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the wind-up criteria for the Scottish new town development corporations are affected by the Scottish Development Department's White Paper, "Housing: The Government's Proposals For Scotland"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The Government's proposals for new town housing, set out in the Scottish housing White Paper, are designed to promote diversity of tenure within the Scottish new towns. It is our intention to review the current policy of transferring new town housing remaining at wind-up to local authorities. These proposals are, however, unrelated to the specification of criteria for determining when the corporations should be wound up.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the community charge

which would have been payable in the current year by district, regional and islands council area were the number of adults registered to pay to be 10 per cent. less than anticipated.

Mr. Lang: No. The illustrative levels of estimated personal community charge published by my right hon. and learned Friend represent the levels which would be required to replace domestic rate income in 1987-88. My right hon. and learned Friend has no intention of publishing alternative figures which would depend on purely hypothetical assumptions.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the rebates scheme under the new community charge poll tax for those people who are *(a)* sick, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* elderly or *(d)* on low incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services hopes to publish draft community charge rebate regulations in the spring or early summer of 1988 following consultation with local authorities.

It is intended that the procedures for assessing needs and resources should be aligned as far as is possible with those included in the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Broadwater Farm Estate (Trials)

67. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the total cost of the recent trials arising from the incidents on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham on 5 and 6 October 1985; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The total cost of the 62 cases brought to trial arising from these events amounts, in respect of fees and witnesses expenses paid to date from both prosecution and defence, to £882,220.

Books (Injunctions)

68. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General what actions he intends to take in relation to the distribution of books in the United Kingdom against which he has successfully sought injunctions abroad.

The Attorney-General: The organised distribution or sale or advertising of "Spycatcher", or of any book in respect of which there is an injunction in this country, is at risk of being a contempt of court. The Treasury Solicitor has received satisfactory undertakings from nearly all recipients of a letter sent on my instructions as a law enforcement officer giving warning of this. I shall continue to direct the sending of such letters. I am considering those cases where the response was unsatisfactory.

Courts (Resources)

69. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Attorney-General what plans the Lord Chancellor has to increase the resources available to the courts in England and Wales.

The Attorney-General: Additional provision has been made available for the court service in England and Wales for the current financial year. The autumn statement reflects further provision for the Lord Chancellor's Department, including the court service over the next three years.

Professional Liability

70. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Attorney-General if he has any plans to seek to amend the Latent Damage Act 1986 with respect to professional liability.

The Attorney-General: No. But I refer my hon. Friend to the Government's decision announced on 28 October by my hon. Friend the Minister for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, to commission a series of studies into selected professions to establish the nature, scope, extent and implications of the liability problems that they face.

Prosecution of Offenders Act 1985

71. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received on the workings of the Prosecution of Offenders Act 1985.

The Attorney-General: I have received a number of representations, both from within and without this House. Some have been supportive of the Crown Prosecutions service, some have not. Of those in the latter category, a great many have contained adverse criticism of the service, which has been either misinformed or misguided. This criticism has failed to acknowledge the excellent work and numerous successes of the service's deeply committed staff; whilst blaming the service for matters which are outside its control, or for which other agencies in the criminal justice system are responsible.

Landlord and Tenant

72. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Attorney-General what action he proposes to take following the publication of the Law Commission paper on landlord and tenant.

The Attorney-General: The Law Commission report on Landlord and Tenant: Reform of the Law (Law Com. No. 162) to which the hon. Member refers is an overall, preliminary survey of a wide topic, and does not put forward detailed proposals for further action.

Land Registry Applications

Mr. Butler: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will take measures to increase the speed with which the Land Registry processes applications for registration.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury has recently approved a significant increase in expenditure and manpower to be made available to enable HM Land Registry to meet its growing commitments. Furthermore, discussions are being held with a view to ensuring that manpower resources can be adjusted more readily to reflect the level of activity prevailing from time to time in the conveyancing and mortgage markets.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Attorney-General how long it takes on average to process a land registration application.

The Attorney-General: The current position is that applications for searches and office copies of entries on the register are processed on average within two to three working days of receipt. Applications for dealings with

registered titles are processed on average within 51 working days. Applications for new titles are processed on average within 140 working days.

Computers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received regarding the extent to which the submission of application forms for export licences to the United States Government by United Kingdom vendors of American computer equipment complies with EEC regulation 2641/84; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have received no representations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what is his policy toward prosecuting companies in the United Kingdom making an application to the United States Government for an export licence for American computer systems which provide as part of their application information which is officially secret; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Any allegation of illegal conduct will be considered on its merits.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mozambique

7. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on future aid programmes to Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far this year we have committed £5 million to be spent on capital projects, £15 million as support for Mozambique's balance of payments, a further £15 million for food and emergency aid and we have a continuing programme of technical co-operation. We expect to maintain a significant level of assistance to Mozambique both directly and through our contribution to projects sponsored by the Southern African development co-ordination conference.

India

78. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to change the level of aid to India.

Mr. Chris Patten: The level of our aid spending in India will continue to be determined by what we can afford and by the rate at which we and the Indian authorities agree on projects to be supported. I look forward to reviewing the progress of our substantial programme with the Indians when I go there in December.

Uganda

79. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for assisting Uganda's economic development.

Mr. Chris Patten: In June this year we pledged £25 million of balance of payments support for Uganda to be spent over two years. £15 million of this has already been allocated — £5 million as bilateral programme aid to finance vital imports for the agricultural, transport and industrial sectors, and £10 million as co-financing with the World Bank special facility for Africa. The remaining £10 million is subject to Uganda maintaining the economic recovery programme agreed earlier this year with the IMF. In addition, we are providing assistance to the transport, health, public administration, education and power generation sectors.

Egypt

80. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department is planning to offer any technical and any other form of assistance to Egypt to help overcome difficulty in that country consequent upon the fall of the water level in the river Nile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have not been asked by the Government of Egypt to provide assistance to help overcome difficulties arising from the fall in the water level of the Nile. We shall certainly consider any requests that they put to us.

Expenditure (Order)

81. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many orders and for how much money have been placed in Britain as a result of Overseas Development Administration expenditure for the latest 12 months period available; and how many jobs have resulted from that expenditure.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1986 approximately 13,000 contracts were placed in the United Kingdom as a result of the bilateral aid programme. Expenditure on British goods and services amounted to £750 million. Procurement of British goods and services on projects and programmes funded by the multilateral aid agencies amounted to approximately £600 million. It has been estimated that the aid programme directly supports about 75,000 jobs in the United Kingdom each year.

East and Central Africa

82. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution has been made in 1987 by the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute to the long-term alleviation of famine conditions in east and central Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute is engaged in a variety of projects which all contribute to the long-term alleviation of famine in east and central Africa. Its research, advisory and field management work there ranges across food security and seed stocks, control of insect pests, improved processing of poor people's food crops such as sorghum, millet and cassava, livestock systems, resettlement projects and co-ordination of climate studies. Earlier this year I allocated some £6·8 million to ODNRI to strengthen the institute's programme of work on insect pest problems affecting rural populations in Africa.

Poor Countries (Development)

83. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the role played by non-Governmental organisations in assisting the development of poor countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Non-governmental organisations play an important and distinctive role in overseas development and are particularly effective at a grass roots level in reaching some of the poorest communities in ways which are not always open to Government to Government aid. Support from the aid programme for non-governmental organisations has increased steadily over the last few years and I have decided, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase our support for the next year under the joint funding scheme by 50 per cent., as well as increasing our support for volunteer recruitment agencies by 18 per cent.

Ethiopia

84. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to help avert famine in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far this year we have committed £10·74 million from the bilateral programme for famine relief in Ethiopia, including an offer of £2 million, which I announced on 17 November, to help the Office of the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator mount an airlift to transport food to those in most urgent need. In addition we are contributing some £12·5 million as our share of the cost of food and other emergency relief provided by the European Community.

85. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with development agencies in Britain about the situation in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: My officials are in regular contact with British voluntary organisations concerned with Ethiopia. A substantial proportion of our relief assistance to Ethiopia is channelled through such organisations, including pledges so far this year of 20,000 tonnes of emergency food aid and support for the joint OXFAM/ Save the Children fund relief trucking fleet.

Population Growth

86. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what place considerations of trends in population growth in recipient countries take in his decisions on the aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Rapid population growth is a key factor affecting economic and social progress in poor countries. We support developing countries which have programmes designed to give parents both healthier families and choice in determining the number and spacing of their children.

Ethiopia and Sudan

87. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government will take to seek to prevent famine in Ethiopia and Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far this year we have committed £10·74 million from the bilateral programme for famine relief in Ethiopia. In addition we have contributed some £12·5 million as our share of the cost of food and other emergency relief provided by the European Community.

For the Sudan Britain has provided about £500,000 in relief aid this year including a co-ordination expert for the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and help for people displaced by war in southern Sudan. We stand ready to provide more assistance if necessary.

UN Development Programme

88. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the United Kingdom is contributing to the United Nations development programme in the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: A total of £23 million.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the proportion of the purchase price of the Upland Goose hotel in the Falkland Islands paid from his Department's grant to the Falkland Islands development corporation.

Mr. Chris Patten: No aid programme funds were involved in the purchase.

Cambodia

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if Her Majesty's Government will consider giving financial or technical assistance to the renovation of the water supply in Phnom Penh, Kampuchea; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the Overseas Development Administration will consider reversing its ban on development aid to the Kampuchean Government in the light of the recent peace initiatives between the Phnom Penh government and Prince Sihanouk's Democratic Kampuchean Coalition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We see no grounds at this stage for changing our present policy on aid to Cambodia.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about making the abuse of solvent a criminal offence; what views he has sought on the matter; and what steps he plans to make.

Mr. John Patten: We occasionally receive proposals in favour of making solvent misuse a criminal offence, but have accepted the judgment of professionals working in the field that this would be counter-productive. We consider that the more effective approach lies through a combination of education and information for parents and professionals and voluntary reductions in supply for retailers, backed where necessary by the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985.

Prisoners (Herbal Medicines)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of the prison service on the availability of herbal medicines to inmates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Responsibility for the health care of inmates of a prison service establishment is vested in the medical officer, who uses his professional knowledge and clinical judgment in deciding the treatment appropriate in each case. Inmates have a right to refuse treatment prescribed by the medical officer but they are not permitted to substitute a treatment of their own prescription unless it is a form of treatment of which the medical officer approves.

Prisoners (Remand and Police Custody)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently being held *(a)* on remand and *(b)* in police cells.

Mr. John Patten: On 31 October 1987, the latest date for which reliable information is available, about 10,570 untried or convicted unsentenced prisoners wre held in prison department establishments in England and Wales and 910 prisoners were held in police cells, many of whom were on remand. By 20 November 1987 the number held in police cells had fallen to 650.

Firearms

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in the last five years have been convicted of crimes involving a legally licensed smooth-bore short-barrelled gun, under 24 in in length.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available from the records of court proceedings held centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take steps to ensure that statistics on the type of weapons which have been used in the commission of crimes are kept;

(2) on how many occasions in each of the last 10 years upon which a firearm has been used in the commission of a crime the offender has been licensed to own *(a)* a shotgun or *(b)* another firearm;

(3) what information he has concerning the numbers of offences committed using firearms in Switzerland in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(4) on how many occasions in each of the last 10 years a firearm used in the commission of a crime has been found to be a firearm stolen from an individual licensed to hold such a weapon;

(5) on how many occasions in each of the last 10 years a self-loading rifle has been reported stolen.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used or stolen is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" chapter 3 of the edition for 1986 (Cm. 233), copies of which are in the Library. The information collected relates to the principal weapon used in the offence, as reported by the victim; only the main class of weapon (rifle, pistol, air-weapon etc.) is recorded because more detailed information could not be collected reliably from victims whose reports are often imprecise. In a large proportion of these offences the weapon used is not recovered. The other information asked for is not available from the records held centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the numbers and types of firearms which are issued to citizens of Switzerland as part of that country's civil defence policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such information as is available to me suggests that Swiss males over the age of 20 may be issued with a firearm, usually an automatic one, to enable them to participate in military service.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had concerning the case for individuals serving in the Territorial Army continuing to practise using self-loading rifles at private shooting clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. We have considered the possibility of exempting certain categories of persons, or members of certain organisations, from the proposed restrictions on full-bore self-loading rifles, but have concluded that any such exemptions would seriously weaken the new controls and discriminate against legitimate shooters who happened to fall outside these categories.

John and George Daly

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who authorised the temporary release from prison of John and George Daly to attend the funeral of their mother; and what was the cost to public funds.

Mr. John Patten: John and George Daly, who are category A inmates, were not "temporarily released" from prison (that is allowed to leave unaccompanied) but attended their mother's funeral service — but not the burial—under escort. This was authorised in accordance with standing instructions by a senior official of the prison department. The cost to public funds was about £200.

Mrs. Sayban Nessa

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following the refusal of permission to his Department to appeal, he will now give instructions for an entry clearance certificate to be issued immediately to Mrs. Sayban Nessa (ref. m378012).

Mr. Renton: I have instructed the entry clearance officer in Dhaka to issue entry clearance to Mrs. Nessa.

Shops Act 1950

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he intends giving to local authorities in relation to prosecuting alleged contraventions of the Shops Act 1950, in the light of the recent referral of a case to the European Court of Justice alleging a breach of article 30.

Mr. Renton: We shall decide what action, if any, is necessary when the outcome of the case is known. There is no reason to suppose that local authorities are not aware of their current responsibility and powers under section 71 of the Shops Act 1950 to enforce its provisions.

Prisoners (Compassionate Release)

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates of prisons have been released temporarily on compassionate grounds in each of the last five years; who authorised such releases; and what was the cost to public funds.

Mr. John Patten: Prisoners may be temporarily released on compassionate grounds on the authorisation of the prison governor, under rule 6 of the Prison Rules 1964 (as amended). The number of such releases and their cost are not recorded centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the meeting between his Minister of State, the noble Lord Caithness, and the all-party delegation representing the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority on Wednesday 18 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the request of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority my noble Friend the Minister of State met a delegation from the authority on 18 November to receive representations in support of its application for a redetermination of their 1988-89 expenditure level. We shall take into account the matters raised at this meeting together with other relevant considerations when coming to a decision on the authority's application.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on *(a)* the incidence of the use of gaming machines by minors and *(b)* the installation of gaming machines in premises providing easy access to minors.

Mr. John Patten: We have some information about the use of amusement machines by young people. We are interested in obtaining clear evidence and that is why my right hon. Friend announced research into this subject on 6 May. There is no statutory prohibition on young people entering many of the premises including amusement arcades which have these machines. When we have the results of the research we shall be in a better position to judge whether it is necessary or desirable to introduce fresh legislation.

Special Constables

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from special constables in the past year about their inability to appeal against a chief constables' decision in disciplinary matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can find no record of any such representations.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received the report of the working group on mentally disordered offenders in the prison system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: A joint Home Office/DHSS working group of officials chaired by Dr. John L. Kilgour, CB, Director of Prison Medical Services was set up last year to consider and report to Ministers on the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in the prison system in England and Wales. There were two main objectives: to see what could be done to minimise the numbers of such prisoners, and to develop arrangements for their treatment whilst in custody and after.

The working group's report describes various factors which bear on the issue and steps which are being taken, or should be put in hand, to bring about improvements. The Government accept the 16 recommendations made. In addition to measures for improving administrative procedures within the Home Office and the prison service, the recommendations include:

Making sure that the courts are fully aware of the non-custodial options open to them, particularly their powers of remand to hospital for report or treatment under sections 35 and 36 of the Mental Health Act 1983, and of the facilities available in the health system.

Continuing as a priority the planned study by the institute of psychiatry, university of London, to produce over the next three years a psychiatric profile of the prison population.

Further encouraging regional health authorities to develop a comprehensive network of provision to meet mental health-care needs in their regions.

Establishing arrangements for patients in prison, on the request of the responsible medical officer, to be assessed by NHS medical staff so that where necessary plans can be made for their continuing care and support on release back into the community.

The report is being made available, on request, to interested organisations and individuals. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he requires the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to inform him of the numbers and types of firearms held by his force;

(2) whether he will publish statistics concerning the numbers and types of firearms held by the Metropolitan police;

(3) what advice his Department has issued to chief constables on the collection and dissemination of statistics on the numbers and types of firearms held by their forces;

(4) what representations he has received concerning the collection and publication of statistics on the numbers and types of firearms held by police forces;

(5) whether he will review his Department's policy on collecting statistics on the number and type of firearms held by police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for each chief officer of police to decide what weapons are required to enable him to discharge his operational responsibilities. He is guided in this by advice issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers. The Home Office is represented on the committee which produces this advice.

The Home Office is responsible for ensuring, through HM inspectorate of constabulary, that police forces are efficient and HM inspectorate checks, during its annual inspections, that police forces have adequate equipment available to them. Police authorities are responsible for providing that equipment and for keeping themselves informed on matters connected with the policing of their area. As police authority for the Metropolitan police, my right hon. Friend has access to information relating to the types and numbers of weapons held by that force.

It is a matter for the judgment of chief officers of police and police authorities as to how much information should be publicly disclosed in relation to police firearms. I gave details of the broad categories of firearms held by the Metropolitan police in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 27 November. We do not believe it to be in the public interest to disclose details of the number of firearms held in each of those categories.

The Department has not issued advice to chief constables on the collection and dissemination of statistics on the numbers and types of firearms held by their forces. The only representations received concerning the collection and publication of such statistics have been from the press.

The above policy is in line with the devolved character of policing in this country under the 1964 Police Act. We constantly watch the working of these relationships to ensure that they are efficient, but so far see no practical advantage in proposing changes to them in this respect.

Nuclear Attack

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 13 November, column *336*, whether his Department has any plans to practice in peacetime the national warning procedures for ballistic missile attack.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation of the Home Office regularly practices the procedures for issuing a national warning of ballistic missile attack.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 13 November, column *336*, to what proportion of the United Kingdom population the sirens intended to warn of impending nuclear attack are intended to be audible.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is estimated that some 90 per cent. of the population should be capable of being warned of an impending air attack by sirens and the whole population by radio broadcasts.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 13 November, column *336*, whether the advice on protective measures in the event of a ballistic missile attack is currently available to the public upon request; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1985 we published emergency planning guidance to local authorities, which provides detailed planning advice on wartime and other emergencies; this was followed in 1986 by "Civil Protection" (a booklet and video) giving a more basic introduction to the subject—both of these are available to the public and copies are in the Library. Arrangements for issuing more direct guidance to the public are kept under review: the nature and timing of such guidance would depend on the nature of the threat evident at the time.

Extradition (Ireland)

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions, in each of the past five years, the Government have been prevented from seeking extradition from the Republic of Ireland because the Republic has not acceded to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

Mr. John Patten: No United Kingdom warrants have been returned unexecuted from the Republic of Ireland in the last five years on the basis that the offences concerned were regarded as political.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tobacco Duty

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in tax in percentage terms on a packet of 20 cigarettes of the most popular brand since May 1979; and what has been the change in the tobacco price index compared with the all items index in the same period.

Mr. Lilley: The total of duty and value added tax on a packet of 20 cigarettes has increased by 188 per cent. since May 1979.

The tobacco price index increased by 160 per cent. between May 1979 and October 1987 compared with an increase of 88 per cent. in the all items index over the same period.

Cigarettes

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax in total, including specific tax, *ad valorem* tax and value added tax, in pence per packet of 20 cigarettes, is levied on *(a)* a packet of United Kingdom manufactured king size cigarettes retailing at £1·55, and *(b)* a packet of imported virginia king size cigarettes retailing at £1·23.

Mr. Lilley: The information is as follows:

	Total tax £
(a) King size cigarettes at £1·55 per packet	1·14
(b) King size cigarettes at £1·23 per packet	1·03

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the retail price index of a 30p per 20 increase in duty on cigarettes.

Mr. Lilley: A measure that would increase the excise duty together with consequential VAT by 30p per 20 cigarettes would increase the retail price index by about 0·7 per cent.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when his Department last surveyed the energy efficiency of the lighting of his Department's building; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Brooke: Surveys have been carried out in most of the Treasury buildings this year. There is scope for greater lighting efficiency and cost-effective recommendations are being pursued.

Photocopiers (House of Commons)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who are the major manufacturers or suppliers of photocopying machines and photocopier paper to the House of Commons; and how long they have held their contracts.

Mr. Brooke: The major supplier of photocopying machines to the House of Commons through HMSO is Rank Xerox (UK) Ltd. A few machines have also been supplied by Oce Copiers (UK) Ltd.; Kalle Infotec Ltd. and Minolta (UK) Ltd. They are supplied under hire agreements which enable any machine to be returned or replaced once the initial period of hire—normally two years—is completed.

The main supplier of copier paper is also Rank Xerox (UK) Ltd. under an HMSO contract let in October 1987. Alternative papers are available under other HMSO contracts.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers in manufacturing employment for each year since 1964; and if he will also express these data as a percentage of the total labour force.

Mr. Lee: The figures are given in the following table.

Civilian employed labour force in manufacturing industries[1] in Great Britain

June each year	[2]Thousands	As a percentage of the Civilian Working Population Per cent.
1964	8,386	34
1965	8,493	35
1966	8,513	35
1967	8,258	34
1968	8,183	34
1969	8,299	34
1970	8,285	34
1971	8,019	33
1972	7,760	32
1973	7,806	32
1974	7,858	32
1975	7,491	30
1976	7,260	29
1977	7,315	29
1978	7,280	29
1979	7,247	28
1980	6,944	27
1981	6,245	24
1982	5,899	23
1983	5,568	22
1984	5,483	21
1985	5,464	21
1986	5,346	20
1987	5,293	20

[1] Figures for dates before June 1971 are based on the 1968 Standard Industrial Classification definition of manufacturing; from June 1971 they are based on the 1980 SIC definition.

[2] Estimates of the self-employed before 1971 are based on information from censuses of population and exchanges of national insurance cards. Estimates from 1971 are based on censuses of population and the results of labour force surveys. The latest firm estimate is for 1986.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage change in manufacturing employment in each of his Department's administrative regions since 1979; and what information he has on comparable figures in other manufacturing countries.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1979 and June 1987 (the latest date for which comparable figures are available) the percentage changes in the numbers of employees in employment in the manufacturing industries of the English standard regions are as follows:

	Percentage change
South East	−27
East Anglia	—
South West	−16
West Midlands	−29
East Midlands	−19
Yorkshire and Humberside	−36
North West	−37
North	−35

Some of the decrease in the numbers of employees in employment in manufacturing in recent years will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, computer services and road haulage, previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

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manufacturing to service sector employment. The information available for other countries is set out in the table below.

Manufacturing employees in employment

Thousands

	1979	*1985*	*Percentage change*
Spain	2,705	2,131	−21·2
Ireland	228	190	−16·7
Belgium	888	753	−15·2
France	5,291	4,589	−13·3
Italy	4,716	4,101	−13·0
Luxembourg	579	516	−10·9
Australia	1,177	1,051	−10·7
United States	21,040	19,314	−8·2
Denmark	522	485	−7·1
Sweden	1,005	947	−5·8
Canada	2,048	1,951	−4·7
Norway	370	354	−4·3
Finland	582	577	−0·9
Greece	448	471	+5·1
Japan	11,070	12,350	+11·6

Source: OECD 'Labour Force Statistics 1965-1985'.

International comparison of labour market statistics should be treated with caution as it is difficult to obtain data for different countries on a consistent basis. This difficulty increases if regional statistics are to be compared between countries. However, the Eurostat publications "Yearbooks of Regional Statistics" give some information on regional manufacturing employment in European Community countries; copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage change there has been in unemployment in each of his Department's administrative regions over the last *(a)* five, *(b)* four, *(c)* three and *(d)* two years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is available from the Library. The table shows, in percentage terms, the change in the numbers of unemployed claimants, adjusted for discontinuity and seasonality, in each standard economic planning region of the United Kingdom, over the periods requested by October 1987. The adjustments are not made for those of my Department's administrative regions which differ from standard economic planning regions.

Percentage

Region	*Persentage change over:* *2 years*	*3 years*	*4 years*	*5 years*
South East	−20·4	−16·6	−9·0	0·4
(Greater London)	−15·1	−9·5	−1·4	10·6
East Anglia	−18·6	−13·3	−10·6	−4·1
South West	−20·7	−16·6	−8·2	0·2
West Midlands	−19·8	−19·9	−17·8	−12·4
East Midlands	−13·8	−13·2	−4·7	4·1
Yorks. and Humber	−11·2	−8·2	−1·2	3·6
North West	−15·8	−14·0	−11·1	−4·3
North	−14·3	−12·9	−5·9	0·2
Wales	−18·9	−16·0	−8·8	−4·7
Scotland	−5·8	−2·1	1·9	6·7
Great Britain	−16·0	−13·4	−7·6	−0·8
Northern Ireland	4·7	8·6	9·6	15·9
United Kingdom	−15·1	−12·4	−6·8	0·0

YTS (Castleford)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage of YTS leavers in the Castleford travel-to-work area going into full-time paid employment within one month of leaving the scheme for each year for which records are available; and what proportion obtained paid work in the section in which they were trained.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission has since April 1985 conducted regular follow-up surveys of all YTS trainees three months after they have left their scheme. Of those who left schemes in the local authority district of Wakefield between April 1985 and March 1986, 52 per cent. found full-time paid employment and 47 per cent. of these were employed in their training occupation.

Of those who left schemes in the district between April 1986 and May 1987, 49 per cent. found full-time paid employment and 35 per cent. of these were employed in their training occupation.

Discrimination

Mrs. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has on discrimination against the employment of persons over the age of 40 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department has not undertaken any recent research on this subject. However, the age of applicants can, in certain circumstances have a bearing on their suitability for a job, but we believe that the employer is normally in the best position to make judgments of this nature.

Union Day

Mr. Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to rename the spring bank holiday "Union Day"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are currently reviewing the whole question of the early spring bank holiday; no decision has yet been taken.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to monitor the health and safety standards of hotels used for housing homeless persons.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

Local authorities have the responsibility to ensure that hotels used for housing homeless persons are satisfactory. They have extensive powers to do so. I am, however, looking at current practice to see whether further advice to local authorities may be necessary.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Lambeth Palace

Mr. William Powell (Corby): To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what is the total number of people employed at Lambeth palace for whose wages and salaries the Church Commissioners are responsible; and what was the total on 1 January in each year since 1970.

Mr. Alison: The total number of people employed at Lambeth palace and paid by the commissioners are as follows:

	Total
1980	40
1981	43
1982	42
1983	43
1984	46
1985	44
1986	46
1987	43

These include the Archbishop's personal staff, the staff of the Lambeth library and the staff engaged in the maintenance of this historic building.

I regret that to prepare figures prior to 1980 would cause a disproportionate expense.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) if he will list the national museums and galleries and their outstations which (i) charge for admission or (ii) seek a voluntary donation; and how much they charge: *(a)* adults, *(b)* children and *(c)* other concessionaries;

(2) whether he will publish *(a)* the attendance figures for each national museum, including their outstations, which operate: (i) admission charges or (ii) voluntary donations for every year since they were introduced and for the year preceding their introduction and *(b)* the cash figures for income generated by charges or donations for each of the above periods;

(3) if he will publish *(a)* total income and *(b)* total expenditure represented by admission charges or voluntary donations for each national museum in the most recent years.

Mr. Luce: It is for the trustees of each national museum and gallery to decide whether it would be appropriate to their particular institution to charge for admission or to seek voluntary donations from visitors and, if so, to determine the level of charges. The operation and monitoring of any such schemes are also matters for the trustees.

The information requested is not readily available, but I will write to the hon. Member.

PRIME MINISTER

Disarmament

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what is her estimate of the proportion of the United State's and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads which the United Kingdom's Trident warheads will represent in the event of the successful conclusion of the 50 per cent.. reductions currently being negotiated in the strategic arms reduction talks.

The Prime Minister: Despite agreement in principle by the United States and Soviet Union to cut strategic forces by 50 per cent. sublimits on different categories of warheads have not yet been agreed. It is therefore not possible to estimate the proportion of United States or Soviet submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads which would be represented by the United Kingdom Trident force.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what are the implications for the maintenance of the United Kingdom's nuclear defence capabilities of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The Prime Minister: A comprehensive test ban treaty is a long term goal. For the foreseeable future, the security of this country will depend on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons and, in these circumstances, we shall continue to conduct the number of tests necessary to maintain the effectiveness of our nuclear capabilities.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply, *Official Report*, 3 November, column 625, what figure for reductions in the Soviet and United States strategic arsenals she has in mind as being sufficiently substantial to warrant reductions in Britain's nuclear arsenal.

The Prime Minister: We have never specified an exact figure for reductions in the superpowers arsenals. The United Kingdom deterrent in any case represents an extremely small percentage of each superpower's arsenal.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply, *Official Report*, 3 November, column 625, whether she will list the outstanding problems upon which progress has to be made before Her Majesty's Government would be willing to open negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The Prime Minister: Lack of adequate verification remains a key obstacle to a comprehensive test ban treaty. The cessation of nuclear testing cannot be divorced from the wider arms control process and the attitudes of other states.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Prime Minister, if, pursuant to her oral answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 555, she will specify those aspects of the proposals by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills for reform of the Official Secrets Act which do not meet her criteria for legislation to replace section 2 of that Act, namely, effectiveness, enforceability and reasonableness; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In the answer to which my hon. Friend refers, I said that the Government have work in hand to find provisions to replace section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. If in the light of that work we decide to bring forward further proposals for reform, we shall announce our intentions. At this stage, while the work continues, it would not be sensible to comment on detailed issues.

WALES

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will make known his plans for local authority capital expenditure for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: Following the autumn review of public expenditure I have decided to increase total gross provision for local authority spending in 1988-89 in Wales to £416 million. This is £15 million (3·7 per cent.) more

than the comparable provision predicted for 1988-89 in last year's public expenditure round, an increase of £5·5 million (1·4 per cent.) over 1987-88 and an increase in real terms of 16 per cent. since the present capital control system was introduced in 1981-82.

My decisions for 1988-89 indicate my priorities for expenditure on services including increases in gross provision for housing (7 per cent.) education (10 per cent.) and the urban programme (15 per cent.)

The increased provision for housing has been set aside for use to encourage local authorities in the cost-effective programmes of enveloping and block repair and to continue the priority estates programme and also to enable local authorities and housing associations to carry forward housing projects for special initiatives in the valleys.

Allowance has also been made in the urban programme for special valleys projects. I shall be announcing my policies for dealing with the special problems in the valleys early in the new year.

In further increasing the provision for education I am recognising the need to improve the fabric of school buildings and also to invest in schools rationalisation projects which will release revenue resources for use elsewhere in the education service.

Local authorities are being notified today of their individual allocations on both housing and non-housing services including major road schemes (£39 million) and projects of regional or national importance or special projects (£10 million). The overall total for allocations is £338 million.

Details of the allocations for individual authorities have been placed in the Library. Allocations for schemes under the urban programme, totalling £29·5 million, will be announced shortly.

Medical Services

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the in-patient facilities for geriatric patients *(a)* in south Clwyd and *(b)* in the immediate vicinity of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant;

(2) what community diabetic services, domiciliary nursing services and domiciliary chiropody services there are in *(a)* the Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant area and *(b)* Clwyd as a whole.

Mr. Grist: These are matters of operational policy for Clwyd health authority and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman writes to the district general manager.

Sheep Variable Premium

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received any representations from Welsh farmers regarding the future of the sheep variable premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received many representations from the industry in Wales regarding the future of the sheep variable premium scheme. This is being considered as part of the EC review of the sheepmeat regime on which negotiations are continuing.

Agricultural Land (Wales)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to bring forward detailed proposals for the set aside of agricultural land in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: At the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 16-18 November, the Commission proposed that the European Community extensification scheme, which already offers an opportunity to introduce incentives to farmers to set aside land used for cereals production, should be strengthened and extended to cover all arable land. Discussion on this is proceeding.

Sheep and Goat Meat

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total production of sheep and goat meat, in tonnes, in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: Total estimated production of sheepmeat in Wales in each full year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*Tonnes*
1979	47,802
1980	49,734
1981	50,910
1982	53,281
1983	55,531
1984	60,873
1985	61,407
1986	62,860

Figures on the production of goat meat in Wales are not available.

Secondary Legislation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those items of secondary legislation made by him during the present parliamentary Session.

Mr. Peter Walker: Those statutory instruments solely made by me during the present parliamentary Session are as follows:

The Rate Limitation (Designation of Authorisation) (Exemption) (Wales) (No. 2) Order 1987. (Made 15 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1251).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) Order 1987. (Made 9 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1181).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 2) Order 1987. (Made 8 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1436).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 3) Order 1987. (Made 27 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1515).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 3) Amendment Order 1987. (Made 3 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1553).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 4) Order 1987. (Made 17 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1638).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 4) Amendment order 1987. (Made 24 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1682). Subject to affirmative resolution.

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 4) Amendment No. 2 Order 1987. (Made 15 October 1987 S.I. 1987/1802).

The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 5) Order 1987. (Made 5 November 1987 S.I. 1987/1894).

The Trunk road (A55) (Abergele By-Pass, Clwyd) (Temporary 30 mph Speed Limit) Order 1987. (Made 8 June 1987 S.I. 1987/1045).

The Trunk Road (A4042) (Malpas Road, Newport) (Traffic Regulation) Order 1987. (Made 11 June 1987 S.I.

1987/1058).

The M4 Motorway (Llangyfelach-Pont Abraham) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 16 June 1987 S.I. 1987/1084).

The M4 Motorway (Llangyfelach-Pont Abraham) (Temporary 40 mph Speed Limit) Order 1987. (Made 16 June 1987 S.I. 1987/1085).

The Trunk Road (A4042) (Llantarnam, Gwent) (Temporary Traffic Restriction) Order 1987. (Made 29 June 1987 S.I. 1987/1152).

The Trunk Road (A483) (Llandybie Road and College St, Ammanford, Dyfed) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 1987. (Made 26 June 1987 S.I. 1987/1222).

The Trunk Road (A477) (Rosemary Lane, Near Llanteg, Dyfed) (Prohibition of Right Hand Turn) Order 1987. (Made 2 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1243).

The Trunk Road (A48) (Chepstow, Gwent) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 13 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1287).

The Trunk Road (A55) (A55/A5119 Junction, Northop, Clwyd) (Temporary Prohibition of Right Hand Turn) Order 1987. (Made 21 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1307).

The Trunk Road (A55) (Diversion) (Llandudno Junction, Gwynedd) (Temporary Prohibition of Waiting) Order 1987. (Made 31 July 1987 S.I. 1987/1395).

The Trunk Road (A483) (Wrexham-Ruabon, Clwyd) (Clearways) Order 1987. (Made 7 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1459).

The Diocese of Bangor (Educational Endowments) (Variation) Order 1987. (Made 4 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1457).

The Trunk Road (A40) (Mitchell Troy, Gwent) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) (No. 2) Order 1987. (Made 10 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1458).

The Swansea-Manchester Trunk Road A483 (Improvement at Boundary Terrace, Llandrindod Wells) Order 1987. (Made 12 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1470).

The Trunk Road (A40) (Monmouth) (Temporary Prohibition of Right Hand Turns) Order 1987. (Made 11 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1490).

The Trunk Road (A470) (Nantgarw to Upper Boat) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 3 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1606).

The Trunk Road (A477) (Llanteg, Dyfed) (De-Restriction) Order 1987. (Made 24 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1605).

The Trunk Road (A402) (Croesyceiliog, Gwent) (Temporary Traffic Restoration) Order 1987. (Made 26 August 1987 S.I. 1987/1604).

The Trunk Road (A4080) (Menai Bridge) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 10 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1650).

The Trunk Road (A453) (Wellington Road, Llandrindod Wells) (Prohibition of Waiting) (Experimental) Order 1987. (Made 17 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1667).

The Trunk Road (A48) (Baglan-Briton Ferry) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 19 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1705).

The M4 Motorway (Brynglas Tunnels, Newport) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) (No. 2) Order 1987. (Made 28 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1751).

The Trunk Road (A465) (Neath-Abbey — Cilfew, West Glamorgan) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 30 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1752).

The London-Fishguard Trunk Road (Fletcher-Hill-Southleys Improvement) Order 1987. (Made 1 October 1987 S.I. 1987/1784).

The M40 Motorway (Capel Llanilltern, South Glamorgan) (Temporary Prohibition of Traffic) Order 1987. (Made 31 October 1987 S.I. 1987/1898).

The Trunk Road (A487) (Newport, Dyfed) (De-Restriction) Order 1987. (Made 23 September 1987 S.I. 1987/1947).

The London-Fishguard Trunk Road (Nant-y-Caws-Coed-Hirion By-pass) Order 1987. (Made 6 November 1987 S.I. 1987/1932).

Mancot Community Hospital, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve the staffing of the physiotherapy department at Mancot Community hospital, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The determination of appropriate staffing levels is an operational matter for the individual health authority concerned.

Eye Tests and Dental Examinations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* eye tests and *(b)* dental examinations took place in Wales in each of the years 1980 to 1986 by area health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of eye tests and dental examinations carried out by district health authorities in Wales in each of the years 1980 to 1986 are given in the following table.

In addition the number of eye tests carried out by the general ophthalmic service in Wales and the number of dental examinations carried out by the general dental service are presented in the following table. However, disaggregated information for these services to district health authority level could not be provided in respect of the eye tests without disproportionate cost and is not available centrally in respect of dental examinations.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Eye tests by hospital opticians[1]							
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	119
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	215	86	77	152	41	90	51
Powys	28	64	49	36	27	36	39
South Glamorgan	12	36	44	27	50	32	46
West Glamorgan	118	22	200	620	331	517	518
Wales	373	208	370	835	449	675	773
Dental inspections by the community dental service[2]							
Clwyd	47,687	59,584	64,030	54,259	48,045	44,667	[3]43,357
East Dyfed	54,967	54,959	33,601	34,839	32,901	31,915	[3]38,494
Pembrokeshire	—	—	16,091	15,508	17,406	19,861	[3]17,269
Gwent	68,063	66,385	60,562	77,991	60,344	65,431	[3]56,609
Gwynedd	16,941	11,349	12,082	12,426	20,266	21,799	[3]19,125
Mid Glamorgan	90,742	99,859	92,070	84,760	86,396	77,365	[3]72,269
Powys	17,987	22,071	16,708	20,275	18,423	19,200	[3]22,109

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
South Glamorgan	44,056	44,694	45,205	45,128	41,555	43,383	[3]41,768
West Glamorgan	42,303	42,276	43,036	40,971	45,486	49,366	[3]53,157
Wales	382,746	401,177	383,385	386,157	370,822	372,987	[3]364,157
Hospital out-patients (dental)[4]							
Clwyd	2,987	3,027	2,941	2,897	2,635	3,180	3,573
East Dyfed	996	937	1,036	1,642	1,461	1,715	1,933
Pembrokeshire	356	908	687	670	641	725	768
Gwent	2,072	2,258	2,717	3,210	3,103	3,237	3,154
Gwynedd	1,506	1,452	1,455	1,451	1,567	1,812	1,364
Mid Glamorgan	1,357	1,506	1,686	2,573	2,878	2,845	2,303
Powys	—	—	—	129	191	178	227
South Glamorgan	22,451	21,906	18,413	18,383	19,878	21,980	20,927
West Glamorgan	4,352	3,884	4,317	4,848	5,033	4,887	4,114
Wales	36,077	35,878	33,252	35,803	37,387	40,559	38,363
Eye tests by the general ophthalmic service in Wales ('000)	576	489	499	519	561	597	623
Dental examinations by the general dental service in Wales ('000)	1,292	1,308	1,388	1,423	1,473	1,497	[3]1,751

[1] First attendance as an out-patient.
[2] Includes first and subsequent inspections.
[3] Financial year 1986-87.
[4] First visit as an out-patient (dental surgery and orthodontics).

Nurses (Radio Communication)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost of providing in each of the area health authorities of Wales *(a)*: (i) two-way radios or (ii) radio pagers for all nurses making domiciliary home visits and *(b)* answering machines at all nursing bases, as outlined in Nursing in the Community, Welsh Office, November 1987, paragraph 8.19 (e); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No estimate has yet been made beyond that set out in paragraph 12.3 of the report.

Japanese Companies

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what dates negotiations commenced between his Department and the three Japanese companies recently announced by him to be coming to Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Grant negotiations between the three companies concerned and my Department commenced in September and October 1987.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Twinbrook Tenants Association

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the withdrawal of ACE funds from Twinbrook tenants and community association, with specific reference to *(a)* the association's right to a hearing on the charges made against them, *(b)* the association's right of reply, *(c)* the association's right of appeal to an independent authority and *(d)* the association's right to re-apply for ACE funds.

Mr. Viggers: ACE funding was withdrawn from the association at the direction of the Secretary of State in accordance with the Government's policy as stated in the reply given by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), on 27 June 1985. For security reasons the details of any such case are not disclosed but the association's attention was drawn to the Government's policy. There is no mechanism within the ACE scheme for appeal to an independent authority. However, a change in the circumstances surrounding a case can lead to a review of the decision taken.

Economy

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what is the annual direct Exchequer subvention to the Northern Ireland economy, indicating the absolute figure, the Northern Ireland contribution and the per capita figure for the population of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Stanley: The latest forecast of the subvention in 1987-88 is £1,569 million and the provisional outturn figure for the subvention in 1986-87 is £1,595 million.

Government expenditure covered from Northern Ireland sources amounted to £2,655 million in 1986-87 and the forecast for 1987-88 is £2,789 million.

The figure for subvention expressed on a per capita basis for the population of the United Kingdom as a whole (not Great Britain) is £28 for both 1986-87 and 1987-88, based on United Kingdom resident population at 30 June 1986.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to introduce legislation so that the community charge will apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 2 November.

Three-judge Courts

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the likely consequences of the introduction of a system of three-judge courts in Northern Ireland; what studies have been

carried out of the feasibility of such a scheme; what views have been sought from or expressed by members of the Bar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: The feasibility of introducing three-judge courts was considered by the right hon. Sir George Baker, OBE in his review of the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (Cmnd. 9222). His report lists the individuals and organisations who submitted written or oral evidence in the course of the review. No other formal study has been made on behalf of the Goverment in recent years, although the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights published a report on the composition of the Crown Court in 1986. As I have said on many occasions and recently in an interview on 21 October, following a meeting of the Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Conference, the Government are not presently persuaded of the merits of three-judge courts.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep and Goatmeat

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total production of sheep and goatmeat, in tonnes, in England, and in each of the English regions in each year since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Total estimated production of sheapmeat in England since 1979 has been as follows:

Dressed carcase weight

	Thousand tonnes
1979	136·4
1980	171·6
1981	154·1
1982	155·4
1983	170·9
1984	167·6
1985	180·5
1986	168·1

Note: Figures for sheepmeat production by region in England are not readily available and would not, in any event, reflect flock sizes or lamb output in those regions. No records are kept on goatmeat production.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he hopes to introduce a second series of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth).

Mr. Forth: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the designation of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today laid before Parliament eight orders designating the next set of environmentally sensitive areas. The new areas are Breckland, the Lleyn Peninsula, the North peak, Shropshire borders, seven Suffolk river valleys and the Test valley. The orders also extend the existing environmentally sensitive areas in the Cambrian mountains and the south downs.

In drawing up these orders we have been guided by a wealth of advice from environmental, farming and other bodies. I should like to express our appreciation of the assistance we received. The favourable response which farmers have given to the first set of environmentally sensitive areas encourages us to hope that these new orders will play an important part in reconciling the demands of agriculture and conservation in some of the country's most beautiful regions. We look forward to inviting applications from farmers from January next year.

We are also providing Parliament with maps showing the boundaries of the areas. The orders themselves set out the management prescriptions and rates of payment. As in the earlier areas, farmers who wish to participate will be invited to do so for an initial period of five years.

Export Rebates

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his statement on 24 November, *Official Report*, column 228, he will make a statement setting out the mechanism and procedures which would have the effect of reducing the levels and costs of export rebates within a stabiliser system.

Mr. MacGregor: The stabiliser arrangements under discussion in the Council would involve reductions in institutional support prices. For products in surplus this should lead to reductions in Community market prices. Export refunds are paid to bridge the gap between Community and world prices, and if Community prices are reduced the rates of export refunds would also be reduced.

Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the United Kingdom accepted responsibility for the cost of disposing of its butter intervention stocks; and what has been the amount sold and the cost involved since that date.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The United Kingdom has accepted no such responsibility. The normal arrangement is that the cost of purchasing intervention products is met by the member state, and the difference between this cost and the proceeds of disposal is reimbursed by the Community when disposal occurs. In March 1987 the Council agreed that for butter disposed of under certain measures since 1 December 1986, this reimbursement would be made in instalments over four years from 1989. A total of 97,190 tonnes of butter had been released under these arrangements up to 31 October 1987. Member states receive payments from Community funds to compensate for the cost of financing deferred repayment. The United Kingdom has so far received £5,122,000.

Cereals

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the maximum price reduction permitted under the Commission's stabiliser plans for cereals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has proposed that a maximum guaranteed quantity for cereals should be introduced, and that if production in a year should exceed that quantity corrective measures should be taken. These

could include a reduction in intervention prices, an increase in the co-responsibility levy, a reduction in the period during which intervention would be available or a combination of these measures. The Commission has not been prepared to indicate in advance precisely what action it would take in a given situation, but it has proposed that adjustments to prices and the co-responsibility levy should be limited to 5 per cent. in the first year of the new system and 7½ per cent. thereafter.

Fruit and Crop Growers

Mr. Speed: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has now completed his assessment of what aid he can give hard fruit growers, crop growers and others affected by the recent storms in southern and eastern England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 27 November 1987]*: Since the occurence of the storm of 15/16 October I have been involved in assessing the extent and nature of the damage on the basis of information from ministerial visits, from the industry and from official sources. Following this assessment we have decided to introduce special storm damage compensation arrangements to help meet the cost of some of the destruction wrought by the storm of 15/16 October. These will apply to two areas where insurance is not normal commercial practice. First, for orchards I am introducing a flat rate payment of £2 per tree for the replacement of certified stock or or its imported equivalent of any trees in commercial orchards which were destroyed or severely damaged in the storm. Because of the possible shortage of nursery stock, growers will be allowed until 31 March 1990 to complete work. Second, I can now confirm, further to my statement of 27 October, that grant rates of 60 per cent. will be offered for the replacement of storm-damaged hedges, windbreaks and traditional stone walls. Grants will also be available for replacement of shelter belts. Where at least 50 per cent. of the trees in the shelter belts are broadleaved grant will be at 60 per cent. in other cases grant of 30 per cent. will be available. Where individual trees in a shelter are being replaced the grant will be determined by the nature of the trees. Farmers and growers will have until 31 March 1989 to complete work and submit claims.

For this second category I initially explored the possibility of special rates of grant under the agricultural improvement scheme. However, I have now chosen instead to make arrangements for both this sector and for orchards in the form of a separate storm damage recovery scheme. This will give a flexibility which will benefit recipients in a number of ways. For instance, eligibility for aid will not be affected by grant already received, nor by the size of the enterprise, nor by the application of investment ceilings. Moreover, certain restrictions of coverage — such as the requirement to plant only particular varieties of orchard trees—can be waived in a separate scheme. Finally, it enables farmers and growers to concentrate on the urgent question of straightforward replacement of damaged items without the complications of meeting general farm improvement criteria.

Prior notification of intended works will need to be given by 31 March 1988. Copies of associated documentation will be made available shortly in the Library of the House. Approval for these arrangements will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for class IV, vote 3 and will rest solely on the authority of the Estimate and the Appropriation Act.

Third, in the glasshouse sector I recognise that growers who have a plan currently in force under the AIS scheme may face problems meeting the closing date of 30 November 1988 because of setbacks caused by the storm and lack of availability of materials and labour. I am therefore proposing to extend the date of submission of grant claims for those with existing plans for six months to the end of May 1989.

I recognise also that as a result of the storm damage holders of agriculture improvement plans will be unable to continue with their investment programmes in the form in which they were originally approved. I have therefore issued instructions to ensure that the rules can be administered flexibly in these cases in recognition of the force majeure circumstances.

I have already made it clear that insurance in the glasshouse sector is the normal rule, and there is no way in which the Government can seek to make equal those who have not insured with those who have done so. I would, however, draw growers' attention to the favourable rates of aid available for heated glasshouse replacement under the agriculture improvement scheme. Growers will be aware that these grants would have been expected to fall back after 30 November 1988, when the derogation permitting the current favourable arrangements expires, to the standard 25 per cent. and 15 per cent. rates within a ceiling of £50,000. I have decided instead to fix rates for replacing heated glasshouses at 45 per cent. and 35 per cent. within a ceiling of £74,000. These arrangements, which will apply initially for a year, are at the highest levels currently permitted under EC Regulation 797/85. Growers who as a result of the storm need to undertake extra works, including site clearance as well as rebuilding, for which they could not have planned stand to derive considerable benefits from these adjustments.

I am very much aware of the difficulties that many have faced as a result of the storm. These measures, which are designed particularly to cover areas where insurance is not practicable will be of real benefit to those worst affected. I would like to express my admiration, and that of my colleagues, for the resilience and industry they are displaying in surmounting these difficult circumstances.

Pollution

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will outline his reasons for not supporting the Nordic proposal, tabled at the Oslo Commission meeting in June, which called for an end to the dumping at sea of industrial waste and sewage sludge by 31 December 1991.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to prohibit the dumping of sewage sludge and industrial waste into the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]*: The United Kingdom was one of four Oslo Commission countries which were not satisfied that the Nordic proposal took adequate account of the available scientific evidence which shows that the sea dumping of sewage sludge and certain industrial wastes causes no environmental harm and can be preferable to other disposal methods.

North sea Ministers agreed at the international conference in London on 24-25 November that sea disposal of harmful industrial wastes should be banned from the end of 1989 but that dumping may continue where the materials concerned are inert or can be shown not to harm the marine environment. They also agreed that sea disposal of sewage sludge may continue provided the total amount of contaminants it contains does not exceed present levels.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline his reasons for not supporting the Nordic proposal, tabled at the Oslo Commission meeting in June, which called for an end to the incineration at sea of industrial waste by 31 December 1991.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* The United Kingdom has a major concern in the protection of the environment and it therefore was one of seven Oslo Commission countries which were not satisfied that a termination date of 1991 would allow sufficient time for the development of environmentally acceptable land-based alternatives to marine incineration.

North sea Ministers, including the Nordic countries, agreed at the international conference on 24-25 November that this practice should be terminated by the end of 1994.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what specific measures he is proposing to be introduced following the inter-governmental conference on the protection of the North sea in order to reduce pollution.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* My responsibilities extend to controls over the dumping and incineration of wastes at sea and, jointly with Environment Ministers, to authorisation of radioactive waste disposal from major nuclear sites. The ministerial declaration agreed by North sea Ministers on 24-25 November, requires all North sea states to:

(i) phase out the dumping of industrial wastes in the North sea by 31 December 1989 except where materials involved are inert or can be shown to cause no harm in the marine environment;

(ii) strictly adhere to Oslo Commission guidelines in order to prevent dumping of contaminated dredged material;

(iii) reduce contamination of sewage sludges with harmful materials and ensure that the quantities of such material reaching the sea in sludge do not exceed 1987 levels;

(iv) minimise or substantially reduce the use of marine incineration by 1 January 1991, and phase out such operations by 31 December 1994;

(v) apply best available technology to minimise any pollution caused by radioactive discharges from nuclear installations;

(vi) provide that the design and construction of repositories for radioactive waste disposal should aim to preclude pollution of the North sea and interference with legitimate uses of the sea.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has for the monitoring and assessment of the dumping of sewage sludge on benthic organisms; how close to the dumping sites; and how frequently the monitoring takes place.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* Scientists from this Department carry out sampling of benthos at sewage sludge disposal sites on an annual or two-yearly basis depending on the scientific advice as to the most effective regime for each site. Samples are taken both at the site and at distances of up to several kilometres.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring arrangements are undertaken in relation to the issuing of licences for the dumping of industrial waste material and sewage sludge into the North sea; how many licences have been issued and to whom in each of the past six years; and how many licencees have been *(a)* proceeded against and *(b)* convicted for the contravention of dumping regulations in each of the past five years.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* Monitoring checks, often unannounced, are carried out of licensed disposal operations from the point of production to deposit in the sea, and conditions in and around the disposal sites are also regularly monitored.

The number of licences issued for the deposit of industrial waste material and sewage sludge into the North sea were:

	Industrial waste	*Sewage sludge*
1982	42	19
1983	36	17
1984	30	20
1985	28	18
1986	22	10
[1]1987	18	9

[1] To date.

Details of licence holders were not made publicly available before 1986. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with details of the holders of licences issued in 1986 and 1987, which are available in my Department for inspection.

No licencees have been proceeded against over the past five years, though cautions have been issued in respect of minor infringements from time to time.

Trawlers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all prosecutions initiated by his Department since 1 January 1985 in respect of trawlers operated by Cmaine Ltd., together with the results of the hearings.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year of Prosecution	*Vessel*	*Nature of Offence*	*Result*
1985	None		
1986	Eder Sands (BM 257)	Landing undersize Megrim	Skipper fined £150 plus £100 costs

Year of Prosecution	Vessel	Nature of Offence	Result
1987	Jose Dolores (FH 560)	Two offences of landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owners fined £2,500 plus £50 costs Skipper fined £2,500 plus £50 costs
1987	Ama Anxtine (FH 567)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £1,500 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £1,500 plus £25 costs
1987	Sicbeck Three (M 321)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £650 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £650 plus £25 costs
1987	Haponica (A 524)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £1,250 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £1,250 plus £25 costs
1987	Nuestra Senora De Gardotza (FH 556)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £500 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £500 plus £25 costs
1987	Ashlea (A 841)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £1,500 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £1,000 plus £25 costs
1987	Summer Swallow (LT 502)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £700 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £700 plus £25 costs
1987	Trueiro (FH 520)	Landing Hake in excess of monthly vessel quota	Owner fined £700 plus £25 costs Skipper fined £700 plus £25 costs

Bass

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he expects to take a decision on the proposed minimum landing size for bass;

(2) what consultations he will have with commercial fishermen about any possible loss of inshore fishing grounds following a decision on minimum landing size for bass;

(3) what mesh size he proposes to introduce for sea bass.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answers 26 November 1987]:* I expect to announce before long specific proposals for the conservation and management of the bass fishery which will embrace the questions of minimum landing size for bass and minimum mesh sizes for gill and similar nets. We shall give fishermen and other interested parties the opportunity to present their views on the proposals before final decisions are taken.

Food Aid

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will devise ways to distribute the European Economic Community butter and beef surpluses to pensioners and the unemployed from post offices, leaving voluntary agencies to distribute these surpluses to the disabled and housebound, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The European Commision has proposed to the Council a permanent scheme for the distribution of food from intervention stocks to the most needy. The Council has not yet taken a decision and so I am not yet able to go into further detail.

Public Rights of Way

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, as part of his farm and countryside initiative, he will introduce legislation to empower persons or bodies other than the relevant highway authority, land owner or occupier to carry out work on public rights of way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* Legislation on highways is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. However, under the farm and countryside initiative I have already sponsored several projects involving long-term unemployed people maintaining and improving public rights of way on private land.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken, or will be taking, to monitor the effectiveness of the code of practice "Ploughing and Rights of Way" published by his Department in July 1986 and to ensure that its provisions are complied with by farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The Countryside Commission and the Ramblers' Association are monitoring the effects of the ploughing code. ADAS staff in this field take account of its case provisions when advising farmers.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made at the recent second international conference on the North sea towards reducing pollution of the North sea.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: The second international conference on the protection of the North sea, which I chaired on 24 and 25 November, achieved unanimous agreement on a wide range of positive and realistic measures to protect the North sea from pollution. I am grateful for the co-operative and constructive attitude shown by all the delegations to the Conference.

The most important measures include:

More stringent controls on the inputs of dangerous substances into rivers, one of the major sources of such inputs;

Reductions of inputs of nutrients into affected areas;

Assessment of the effects of atmospheric pollution of the North sea and reduction of atmospheric emissions of pollutants where possible;

An end to the dumping in the North sea of harmful industrial wastes, by the end of 1989;

A ceiling, at 1987 levels, on dangerous contaminants in sewage sludge disposed of in the North sea;

Reducing the use of incineration of wastes at sea by 65 per cent. by 1 January 1991, and seeking the agreement of the Oslo convention to phasing out this practice by 31 December 1994;

Recommending to the International Maritime Organisation that the North sea be declared a Special Area

under Annex V (Garbage) of the MARPOL 73/78 convention (this would effectively prohibit the dumping of garbage from ships anywhere in the North sea;

Applying the best available technology to minimise pollution from radioactive discharges;

Setting up a task force to ensure better co-ordination of North sea research and monitoring (the United Kingdom is to host the inaugural meeting in early 1988);

Enhanced co-operation on airborne surveillance of off shore operations and of shipping;

Recognition of the special needs of the Wadden sea.

It was also agreed to hold a third conference, in The Netherlands, in early 1990, to review progress.

I am arranging for copies of the ministerial declaration to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mobile Homes

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the increasing value of mobile homes, he will review the percentage commission permitted to owners of sites where a mobile home is sold.

Mrs. Roe: The present maximum rate of commission of 10 per cent., set by the Mobile Homes (Commission) Order 1983, compares with the previous limit of 15 per cent. under the Mobile Homes Act 1975. We consulted widely before fixing the present maximum and we have no plans to amend it.

Rating Reform

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the introduction of the community charge and unified business rate will affect owner-occupiers of commercially rated properties such as small hotels and guest houses.

Mr. Howard: Those for whom a hotel is their main residence will be liable for a community charge and eligible for rebates in the usual way. Hotels and guest houses which are not predominantly used as main residences will be subject to non-domestic rates like other business premises. Where a part of a hotel is used as a main residence, non-domestic rates will be payable only in respect of the remaining part.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures on the scale of inter-regional transfers through resource equalisation mechanisms for all years 1980-81 to 1987-88, on the same basis as figure 12 on page 31 of Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 17 November 1987]:* The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Northern	140	158	172	182	203	201	208
North West	194	211	225	240	271	243	251
Yorkshire and Humberside	249	280	299	321	362	363	380
East Midlands Region	101	115	129	136	147	131	141
West Midlands	29	29	29	40	42	(4)	2
East Anglia	31	33	34	37	36	19	23
South East	(122)	(143)	(149)	(165)	(200)	(323)	(343)
South West	126	142	146	158	176	160	168
Greater London	(747)	(825)	(885)	(949)	(1,037)	(789)	(831)

Note. Figures for 1984-85 differ from those shown in Figure 12 of Cmnd. 9714 as a result of later data and a different treatment of grant holdback.

Comparable figures cannot be given for 1980-81 because a different grant system was then in operation.

The figures show one way of assessing the contribution of both the domestic and non-domestic sector to resource equalisation. They are not a guide to the grant effects of replacing domestic rates with the community charge.

Public Buildings (Lighting)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Property Services Agency last surveyed the energy efficiency of the lighting of those public buildings for which the agency is responsible; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency has been carrying through a programme of energy-saving measures in Government buildings since the early 1970s. These have included improvements to lighting installations by installing more efficient lighting fittings and the provision of photo-electric, occupancy and time controls where appropriate. Departments have also been encouraged to conserve lighting energy by good housekeeping.

More recently, the Property Services Agency and the Ministry of Defence has embarked on a programme of energy surveys of all the main Defence sites. These are identifying opportunities for improving energy efficiency including lighting installations. On the Government's Civil Estate a recently formed panel of departmental energy managers is considering to what extent energy surveys would be worthwhile for the Civil Estate.

Chlorofluorocarbons and Halons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 28 October, *Official Report*, column *277*, what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to implement the Montreal protocol to halve the consumption of chlorofluorocarbons by 1999, and to hold the consumption of halons at 1986 levels.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer to the answer I gave on 29 October to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) at column *436*.

Listed Buildings

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now review the arrangements under which compensation payments, due when consent is refused by his Department in respect of listed buildings, are required to be paid by the relevant local authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: The only provision for compensation when listed building consent is refused is in section 171 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 under which compensation may be payable when consent is refused for works which do not require planning permission or which are permitted under a development order. The consultation paper on planning compensation, which my Department issued in April 1986, included a proposal to repeal section 171. We will announce our conclusions following the consultation in due course.

Shared Ownership Schemes

Mr. John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many shared ownership schemes are at present operating within the London borough of Bromley.

Mrs. Roe: I regret that this information is not available. The borough has itself reported no shared ownership sales.

Waste Paper

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the total waste value of all the paper supplied to the Palace of Westminster, including Order Papers, Her Majesty's Stationery Office papers and stationery.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency's only involvement is to arrange the removal of waste paper from the Palace of Westminster. The work is carried out under a contract arranged by HMSO at no cost to the agency.

Rotherham Enterprise Zone

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of jobs created in the Rotherham enterprise zone; what proportion of these are full-time; and what proportion are in business not previously based within a five-mile radius.

Mr. Trippier: There were 531 employees in Rotherham enterprise zone at designation. By December 1985 1,100 people were employed; of these, 92 per cent. were full-time employees. More up-to-date information and information concerning previous locations from which firms currently in enterprise zones have operated will be included in the report by consultants, shortly to be published.

Truscon RD27 Houses

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to make a decision on the designation of Truscon RD27 houses under the housing defects legislation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department is currently pursuing a relevant further point with one of the owners of these properties. We shall reach a decision as soon as we can.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish "An Evaluation of The Enterprise Zone Experiment" by PA Cambridge Economic Consultants, received by his Department in July.

Mr. Trippier: This report is to be published soon.

Dog Licences

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the removal of the dog licence.

Mr. Moynihan: Since the publication of the Local Government Bill on 26 June, I and the Department have received some 1,350 letters from hon. Members and others. In addition, the Department has received some 8,500 printed postcards or letters prepared by organisations concerned with dogs. Although the majority of representations support a national campaign to retain the licence, a significant minority are in favour of our proposal to abolish it.

Council Rents (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for the average rents currently charged to council tenants in each London borough.

Mrs. Roe: Average weekly unrebated rents, net of charges for amenities and rates, for individual London boroughs are published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in "Housing Rents Statistics at April 1987" a copy of which is in the Library.

Following are estimates for boroughs which did not respond to that survey, based on other information supplied to my Department.

Estimated average weekly unrebated rents at April 1987

	£
City of London	21·76
Hackney	14·17
Islington	16·22
Lambeth	16·19
Southwark	16·30
Tower Hamlets	18·00
Westminster	25·69

Development Corporations (Budgets)

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the total annual budgets for *(a)* the London Docklands Development Corporation and *(b)* the Merseyside Development Corporation in each financial year since their inception; and, of this, what proportion was spent on public relations, marketing and advertising.

Mr. Trippier: The MDC's expenditure for each year since 1981 together with expenditure on publicity and promotion is as follows:

Year	*Total expenditure (£ million)*	*Publicity and promotion (£ million)*	*Percentage*
1981-82	5·032	0·031	1
1982-83	20·769	0·354	2

Year	Total expenditure (£ million)	Publicity and promotion (£ million)	Percentage
1983-84	31·868	0·603	2
1984-85	29·241	0·719	2
1985-86	27·446	0·604	2
1986-87	24·842	0·565	2

Relevant information on the LDDC's expenditure is contained in its annual reports, copies of which are laid before the House.

TRANSPORT

Rolling Stock Procurement Policy

10. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed with the chairman of British Rail its rolling stock procurement policy.

Mr. Channon: The policy of the Railways Board is competitive procurement. This has been agreed with Ministers. Its implementation is a matter for the board.

21. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of his Department in respect of the employment implications of procurement decisions made by British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: Decisions on procurement are for the Railways Board, and any employment implications would be matters for them and the contractors concerned.

34. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed the rolling stock procurement policy of British Rail with its chairman.

47. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had any discussions with the chairman of British Rail concerning the implications of the board's procurement policy.

50. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has issued any guidance on locomotive procurement policies.

Mr. David Mitchell: The policy of the British Railways Board is competitive procurement. This has been agreed with Ministers. Its implementation is a matter for the board.

British Rail (Catering)

13. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the privatisation of catering on British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: At stations the Railways Board is putting catering sites operated by Travellers Fare out to competitive tender for which Travellers Fare can compete. On trains private sector firms are supplying food for the new modular catering on InterCity. More private trolley services are being introduced on provincial and Network SouthEast services.

National Dock Labour Scheme

14. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effects of the national dock labour scheme on the growth of business in ports of the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since 1967, when the present dock labour scheme was introduced, scheme ports' share of Britain's non-fuel traffic has fallen from 92 per cent. to 70 per cent. It is impossible to gauge the extent to which the scheme contributed to this relative decline.

P and O Ferries

15. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of P and O Ferries; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: On 28 October. A variety of matters were discussed.

London Regional Transport

16. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport; and what was discussed.

Mr. Channon: On 19 November when I discussed with him the disaster at King's Cross Underground station.

Motorway and Trunk Road Construction

17. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current level of investment in motorway and trunk road construction; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Provision to £893 million, about 28 per cent. more in real terms than in 1979-80.

MOT Tests

18. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the procedures for licensing vehicle testing stations for MOT tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, next year.

Road Schemes, London

19. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of all costed road schemes currently planned for the Greater London area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About £1·3 billion.

Driving Test

20. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to receive the report on the privatisation of the driving test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 19 November.

BR (Electrification)

22. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss electrification schemes.

Mr. Channon: I will be happy to discuss electrification schemes with the chairman of British Rail whenever he wishes.

Heavy Goods Vehicle Driver Testing

23. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce heavy goods vehicle driver testing facilities on the Isle of Skye; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Long-distance Coaches

24. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the number of passengers travelling on long-distance coaches; and how this differs from the 1979 figures.

Mr. David Mitchell: The latest figures published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain" apply to 1984. In that year there were 17 million passenger journeys on express services, compared with 15 million in 1979, an increase of over 13 per cent.

Road Schemes (London)

25. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much capital expenditure his Department has provided for road schemes in London in the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the five years to 31 March 1987, the Department has spent over £210 million on trunk road schemes in London and supported expenditure of over £350 million on schemes promoted by the GLC and the London boroughs.

British Rail Engineering

26. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the value of non-railway supply orders received by British Rail Engineering Ltd. for each year since 1980; and what has been the value of export rail orders for the same company for each year since 1980.

Mr. David Mitchell: BREL has provided the following figures in £ millions:

	Non-railway equipment orders	*Export orders*
1980	0·9	0·8
1981	0·4	3·3
1982	0·8	38·2
1983	0·5	20·7
1984	0·1	3·8
1985	0·9	9·5
1986	0·1	6·4

All figures are for calendar years and have been rounded to the nearest £100,000.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Scretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reinvest the money from the sale of British Rail Engineering Ltd. in British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: Proceeds of the sale will go directly to the British Railways Board, and will therefore reduce its external financing requirement.

London Transport (Driver-only Buses)

27. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what criteria London Regional Transport decides which bus routes are to go over to driver-only operation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Decisions about the conversion of Bus routes to one-person operation are matters for the management of London Regional Transport and its operating subsidiary, London Buses Ltd. I understand that such decisions are taken within a framework which take into account both the direct financial effects and wider costs and benefits including lesser risk to crew, greater reliability and longer running and boarding times.

M25

28. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the volume of traffic using London's M25 orbital motorway in relation to forecasts; and what plans he has to facilitate traffic flows in the future.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The success of the M25 has meant that it is attracting higher volumes of traffic than forecast. We are determined to ensure that the M25 continues to fulfil its function of keeping through traffic out of London. Work to widen the sections between junctions 11 and 13 will start soon. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced our intention of widening the section between junctions 15 and 16 and consultants have been appointed. We expect to commission a full review of the M25 to identify potential problem areas shortly.

Drink-Driving Campaigns

29. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the results of anti-drink driving campaigns over the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has carried out regular anti-drink-drive campaigns since 1976 and has monitored them.

Our surveys over this period, regularly reported in "Annual Road Accidents Great Britain: The Casualty Report", show a greater public awareness of the problem, and a hardening of attitudes against drinking drivers.

The survey of the Department's 1987 summer campaign found that 80 per cent. of men spontaneously recalled the TV advertisements.

Responses to survey questions suggest that the likelihood of someone driving after drinking has been significantly reduced in the last 10 years. 53,000 more roadside breath tests were carried out in 1986 in England and Wales than in 1985—up 20 per cent.—resulting in the detection of 5,000 more drivers over the legal limit —an increase of 5 per cent. In 1986 37 per cent. more drivers and riders involved in injury accidents were breath tested than in 1985. Despite this increase, 5 per cent. fewer failed the test.

Drinking and driving remains our most serious road safety problem. We will continue to make every effort to tackle it.

Road Humps

30. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussion Ministers have had with county surveyors about the use of road humps as a means of reducing accidents and preventing the breaking of road speed restrictions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lots.

County surveyors were amongst interested organisations consulted prior to the introduction of the new Road

Humps Regulations 1986. A new leaflet has recently been issued giving updated guidance to local authorities. Identification of suitable sites and installation of road humps are matters for local highway authorities.

Long-distance Coaches

31. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate on the number of route miles travelled by long-distance coaches; and how this differs from the 1979 figures.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information on route miles is not available. However, vehicle miles by long distance express coaches increased from 65 million in 1979 to 88 million in 1984, the latest available estimate.

Motorways (Speed Limit Signs)

32. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to place speed limit signs reading 70 on motorways at appropriate places, and to replace with a 70 sign any existing signs which comprise a black diagonal stripe on a white circle.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are planning an experiment with 70 mph signs on a stretch of motorway. We need to discover whether such signs have a significant effect on vehicle speeds. For the present, the signing system of national speed limits on motorways remains unchanged.

Civil Aviation

33. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to issue a White Paper on civil aviation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to issue another White Paper on civil aviation. The Government's objectives are set out in the 1984 airline competition policy White Paper, Cmnd. 9366.

London (Fare Increases)

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the projected fare increases for London in 1988.

Mr. David Mitchell: LRT has announced fare increases for January 1988 averaging 9½ per cent.

Gatwick Airport

36. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many landing slots are currently available at Gatwick and how many are currently used by *(a)* British Airways, *(b)* British Caledonian and *(c)* other airlines.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We understand from the Gatwick scheduling committee that, of a theoretical total number of slots available for aircraft movements, 182,423 were used in the period September 1986-August 1987. These were distributed as shown below.

	Number[2]
British Airways[1]	17,965
British Caledonian[1]	32,345
Other airlines	113,833
Miscellaneous business aviation movements, positioning flights etc.	18,280
Total	182,423

[1] including British Airtours and Cal Air respectively.
[2] Slots allocated for aircraft movements September 1986-August 1987.

Mini Buses

37. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the safety standards applied to mini buses.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: From 1 April 1988 new mini buses will have to comply with requirements contained in schedule 6 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. Most new mini buses are already being constructed to these requirements. Older mini buses must comply with specific regulations according to their actual use.

New Roads

38. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of new *(a)* motorway and *(b)* all-purpose trunk road he expects to open in 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1987-88 we expect to open 80 miles of all-purpose trunk road. No new sections of motorway will be completed this year.

There are over 300 major schemes in the forward programme. These will add 118 miles of new motorway and 950 miles of all-purpose trunk road when complete.

Channel Tunnel

39. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what way he plans to liaise with British Rail to ensure that the benefits of the Channel tunnel for both passengers and freight are maximised in the regions of the United Kingdom apart from the south-east of England.

Mr. David Mitchell: Section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act requires British Rail to prepare a plan by 31 December 1989 setting out their proposals for the dispersal of rail traffic through the tunnel. I understand that the board intends to consult widely during the preparation of this plan. I shall be taking an interest in progress in the course of my regular contacts with British Rail.

British Railways Board

40. **Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has recently held with the chairman of the British Railways Board; on what matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman and I meet regularly and discuss a wide range of matters.

M1

41. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any major road repairs are planned on the M1 between where it ends in London and the Bedfordshire/Buckingham border in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following major repairs are planned:

Location	Scheme	Expected duration
J4-5	Overlay both carriageways and construct climbing lane. Contraflow.	March-November
J12-13	Central reserve hardening, adjustment of safety fencing. Lane closures (both carriageways).	January-March
J12-13	Overlay northbound carriageway. Contraflow.	June-August

All reasonable measures will be taken to reduce delays to the road user, including the use of lane rental contracts.

Tyre Tread Depth

42. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to revise the present legal requirements on minimum tyre tread depth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Merchant Fleet

43. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present size of the British merchant fleet.

Mr. David Mitchell: At 30 September the numbers and deadweight tonnage of British registered merchant vessels 100 gross tonnes and over were as follows:

	Number	Million deadweight tonnes
All British registries	3,170	35·5
of which:-		
United Kingdom	2,056	7·9
Crown Dependencies[1]	151	4·0
Overseas Dependent Territories[2]	963	23·6

[1] The Crown Dependencies are the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

[2] The Dependent Territories with shipping registers are Anguilla, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Montserrat, St. Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

Pollution

44. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors are employed by his Department on enforcement of the 1973 international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships in British ports and waters for which his Department has responsibility; and how many prosecutions have been brought annually since 1980 under its provisions.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department employs 138 marine surveyors who as part of their duties survey vessels and their equipment to ensure compliance with the 1973 international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships which entered into force in 1983.

Prosecutions are normally brought under the Prevention of Pollution Act. Since 1980 these were as follows:

	Numbers
1980	42
1981	33
1982	39
1983	18
1984	13
1985	10
1986	2

BA-BCal Merger

45. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any recent representations concerning the establishment of a further airline following the Government's acceptance of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendations on the proposed British Airways/British Caledonian merger.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has not received any recent representations about the establishment of a new airline.

Nationalised Industries (Procurement Policies)

46. **Ms. Clare Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to encourage nationalised industries to give preference to British companies in their procurement policies.

Mr. David Mitchell: The individual nationalised industries have management responsibility for their purchasing decisions. But their attention has been drawn to the importance the Government attaches to securing value for money in making procurement decisions.

Air Traffic Controllers

48. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many air traffic controllers there were at Gatwick and Heathrow in 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Staffing levels are a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority.

Road Accidents

49. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further plans he has to seek to reduce the numbers of road accidents.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In July this year we published the outcome of a wide-ranging review of road safety—"The Next Steps". A copy was placed in the Library of the House on 8 May. The review confirms that there is no simple formula for reducing the number of road accidents and stresses the need for changes in social attitudes if we are to make our roads significantly safer.

We are presently consulting a wide range of interested organisations about how best to implement the review's recommendations about priorities for action in order to achieve the objective we have set of reducing casualties from about 300,000 a year now to 200,000 a year by the end of the next decade.

To achieve this target we must concentrate on measures which are demonstrably cost-effective, particularly in the fields of road engineering and vehicle safety.

Human error is a main factor in at least 70 per cent. of road accidents. To gain a fuller understanding of driver behaviour we have increased expenditure on research in this field by £600,000 a year. We are also continuing our efforts to improve the quality of road safety education.

The worse example of behavioural failings is the drinking driver and we shall continue to do all we can to tackle this special menace.

Highway Code

51. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to educate all road users on the need to follow the terms of the Highway Code relating to road discipline.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All first applicants for a provisional driving licence automatically receive a copy of the Highway Code. Candidates for a full driving licence have to demonstrate their knowledge of the Highway Code to pass the driving test. In addition, approximately 500,000 Highway Codes are sold each year.

The Department is spending £3¼ million in the current year and we work jointly with local government and the police, ROSPA and other voluntary bodies to improve standards of driving and to promote road safety.

We welcome and co-operate fully with the growing media news and current affairs coverage of the causes of crashes and collisions which lead to over 5,000 deaths and 300,000 injuries each year.

M25 (Motorway Service Area)

52. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement about the construction of a motorway service area on the M25 at Iver, in Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am still not in a position to make an announcement. I hope to make an announcement soon.

Fares

53. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on fares in public transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Fares on public transport are a matter for the operators concerned or, in the case of bus services supported by local authorities, for those authorities. The Government's policy is to ensure a competitive environment for these fares decisions.

Motorway Repair Programme

54. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made on the motorway repair programme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Record progress is being made. The Department is on course to renew 84 miles of motorway and 218 miles of other trunk roads this year. We intend to renew over the next three years some 240 miles of motorway and 600 miles of other trunk roads. We plan to eliminate the backlog of capital works by 1992.

London Regional Transport

55. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he initiated prior to his decisions setting new objectives for London Regional Transport, its subsidiary companies and contractors.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend consulted London Regional Transport, as he is required to do under the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

London (Buses)

56. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average age of vehicles currently used in London on *(a)* London Regional Transport bus routes and *(b)* contractors' routes.

Mr. David Mitchell: This information is not available. Decisions on the quality and type of vehicles employed on tendered routes are a matter for London Regional Transport and the operator concerned. Decisions on the quality and type of vehicles employed on London Buses Limited routes are a matter for that operator.

Airline Route Competition

57. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards airline route competition.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The objectives of the Government's airline competition policy are set out in the 1984 White Paper (Cmnd. 9366).

Motorway and Trunk Road Maintenance

58. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current level of investment in motorway and trunk road maintenance; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Provision has been made for £248 million to be spent on capital maintenance in the present financial year. The corresponding figure for 1978-79 was £46 million. This represents an increase in real terms of about two and a half.

Lorries (Spot Checks)

59. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to increase spot checks on lorries entering the United Kingdom prior to cabotage being introduced as a result of European Economic Community competition policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Levels of enforcement will be maintained. We do not expect the introduction of cabotage to lead to a large increase in the number of foreign lorries coming to this country.

BR (Catering)

60. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the privatisation of catering on British Rail; and what publicity exercises British Rail has engaged in to promote catering services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my answer earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). The board undertakes a wide range of promotional activities for catering services, at stations, on trains and in the media.

Humber Bridge

61. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is prepared to write off part of the accumulated capital debt of the Humber bridge; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I had a meeting recently with representatives of the Humber Bridge Board. They recognised the need to increase revenue by raising tolls, which are now less in real terms than when the bridge opened in 1981. I undertook to consider the board's proposals urgently. Subject to that consideration, the Government would be prepared to write off so much of the debt as could not be recovered by tolls at a realistic level.

East Coast Sleeper Service

62. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about British Rail's proposal to withdraw the east coast sleeper service.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received seven representations protesting about BR's decision; one from a councillor in Berwick upon Tweed, four from hon. Members, one from a member of the Upper House, and one from the Scottish Association for Public Transport.

West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority

63. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority concerning the budget for 1988-89.

Mr. David Mitchell: The authority has applied to the Secretary of State for redetermination of its 1988-89 expenditure level from £57 million to £69·8 million. I met representatives of the PTA on 26 November.

BA/BCal (Merger)

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will take to prevent British Airways breaking undertakings given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in respect of its proposed purchase of British Caledonian.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If the merger goes ahead, the Government expect British Airways' proposals to be implemented in full, and the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has undertaken to report to me a year later about this. We are satisfied that appropriate powers are available to my right hon. and noble Friends the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, and Transport, and the chairman of the CAA in the event that BA did not implement its proposals in full.

Lorries

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the numbers of foreign lorries entering the United Kingdom which are overloaded.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) earlier today.

Dartford Tunnel

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the safe life of the Dartford tunnel; whether the Essex and Kent county councils have formally transferred responsibility to his Department; and what is the programme for the building of the new four-lane bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The two tunnels under the Thames at Dartford were completed in 1963 and 1980. There are no reason why they should not survive as engineering structures indefinitely, provided that they continue to receive appropriate maintenance.

The Dartford-Thurlock Crossing Bill, currently before the House, would, if approved by Parliament, transfer the tunnels to the Secretary of State on a date to be appointed by him.

The Bill would also authorise the construction of the new four-lane bridge. It would be built by Dartford River Crossing Ltd., which is contracted to design, build and finance the bridge and operate the whole crossing, taking tolls for a maximum of 20 years or until the company has recovered its costs, whichever comes first.

If the Bill is not substantially amended so as to require further design work, the company proposes to begin construction about one month after Royal Assent. Construction is expected to take 2½ years.

Ship-to-shore Radio

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the annual subsidy paid to British Telecom to finance ship-to-shore radio stations; what has been the cost per annum for the last five years; and if he will break down the cost by reference to *(a)* MF, *(b)* VHF, *(c)* HF, *(d)* NAVTEX and *(e)* weather broadcasts.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department pays no annual subsidy to British Telecom. Payments for various categories of broadcast messages over the past five years are summarised in the following table, but the information is not available in precisely the form requested:

£000

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
NAVTEX	Nil	53	4	Nil	[1]114
Weather and Gales	253	268	240	403	468
Distress Watch and other broadcasts	1,338	1,574	1,554	1,777	2,170

[1] Includes payments in respect of preceding years.

London Underground

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases of the doors of underground trains opening while the train is in motion have been reported in each of the past five years: *(a)* on the central line and *(b)* on all the Underground network; what steps London Regional Transport has taken to prevent this occurring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: During the period 1983 to 1986 no incidents of this kind were reported. So far during 1987 the railway inspectorate has been notified of seven such incidents, two of them on the central line. Since none of the incidents involved injury to persons they were not strictly reportable under the legislation. The 1987 reports prompted discussion earlier in the year between the inspectorate and London Underground Ltd. LUL has been asked to examine the problem, to report on its findings and in doing so to consider what reasonable and practicable modifications to the rolling stock might be introduced such as to prevent errors by train crews, the only identified cause of the reported incidents, from causing train doors to open during running.

Vehicle Identification Numbers

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to whether Japanese law requires that the type-face used to mark vehicle identification numbers remains unchanged for all the cars imported into Japan of a particular model; and if he has any plans to introduce similar requirements in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Such information is not readily available. In the United Kingdom a vehicle identification number has been required on all cars first registered since 1980. The size and type of character are prescribed in Community Directives 76/114/EEC and 78/507/EEC.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the sale of British Rail Engineering Ltd. will include the engineering workshops on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The engineering workshops on the Isle of Wight are part of BR's maintenance depot network and are not part of BREL.

Rail Network (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to privatise British Rail's network on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. David Mitchell: Our policy is for BR to increase the role of the private sector in the provision of services to the railway. BR has put no plans to me for privatising its line on the Isle of Wight.

Rapid Transit System (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the views unanimously agreed by the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority on the funding of the light rapid transit system for Manchester; what action he is taking; and when he expects to advise the House of his decision.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. I am considering the authority's views together with advice that I have received from my financial advisers about possible private sector financial participation in the proposed system. We intend to advise the House of our decision as soon as possible.

Commercial Vehicles (Central London)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if, as an experiment during the Christmas shopping period, he will take action to keep commercial vehicles out of roads in central London for which he has responsibility between the hours of 11 am and 5 pm; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take action to keep commerical vehicles out of roads in central London for which he has responsibility between the hours of 11 am and 5 pm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no trunk roads, for which my right hon. Friend is responsible in the central London area.

Responsibility for traffic management initiatives on local roads in the central London area rests with the London boroughs as the relevant highway authorities. The time required for statutory processes associated with the powers available for highway authorities to restrict the classes of traffic using roads, rules out local highway authorities introducing any new lorry bans on their roads before Christmas.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a red line system to supplement the yellow line system of parking restrictions, the former to apply to key routes through central London for which he is responsible with a heavy fine payable by drivers who fail to observe these restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Good compliance with parking regulation depends on a proper understanding of the system and on effective enforcement. The present system of road signs and yellow lines on roads and kerbs already applies to all routes through Central London.

I do not consider that a further system of road signs and markings would of itself lead to better understanding or enforcement.

Enforcement is becoming more effective.

Vale of Rheidol Railway Line

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the proposed privatisation of the Vale of Rheidol line, he will give details of the amount spent in *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue account on the line in the last year.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the details in due course.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much local highway authority expenditure he intends to accept for transport supplementary grant in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I have decided to accept £382 million of local authority highway expenditure for transport

supplementary grant in 1988-89. Grant will be paid on this expenditure at a flat rate of 50 per cent. The total of £191 million TSG is more than 6 per cent. higher than for 1987-88.

A total of 67 new major—that is, costing over £1 million—schemes will be supported through TSG for the first time. Among these are the Dartford northern bypass; Lower road widening, Southwark; Park road relief road, Liverpool; a further stage of the Avon ring road; and other important improvements in both urban and rural areas.

More than 260 other major schemes will continue to receive TSG support. Many of these schemes are already under construction or are due to start in the current financial year. With TSG support to their road programmes, local authorities have reported completion of 49 schemes costing £145 million in 1986-87 and a start of works on 57 schemes costing £197 million. During 1987-88, they plan to complete a further 66 schemes costing £249 million and start 72 costing £372 million.

In deciding the distribution of transport supplementary grant for 1988-89, I have considered carefully the transport policies and programmes submitted by each local highway authority, and have looked at the extent to which authorities' programmes relate to roads of more than local importance. Many local authority roads—such as major urban roads and roads on the primary route network—carry significant amounts of longer-distance through traffic, and thus complement the trunk road network. Improvements to such roads are important locally because they save lives, reduce congestion and relieve communities from the effects of through traffic. They are also of national benefit by aiding the efficient flow of goods, people and services. TSG reflects the national taxpayers' interest in helping local authorities to improve these roads.

Many smaller schemes on these heavily trafficked roads produce very significant accident savings and other benefits. I have therefore taken into account almost £59 million of expenditure on minor (under £1 million) schemes for grant in 1988-89, an increase of 7·3 per cent. on 1987-88.

The amount of expenditure accepted for TSG and the amount of grant for each local highway authority is set out in the table below. Councils are being informed individually today of their own figures.

The Distribution of Transport Supplementary Grant for 1988-89
£ million

Authority	*Expenditure accepted for TSG*	*Grant*
Avon	8·612	4·306
Bedfordshire	6·498	3·249
Berkshire	5·376	2·688
Buckinghamshire	1·414	0·707
Cambridgeshire	4·510	2·256
Cheshire	2·728	1·36[illegible]
Cleveland	6·324	3·162
Cornwall	4·540	2·270
Cumbria	2·800	1·400
Derbyshire	1·366	0·683
Devon	7·002	3·501
Dorset	8·640	4·320
Durham	3·876	1·938
East Sussex	4·242	2·121
Essex	17·460	8·730
Gloucestershire	2·154	1·077
Hampshire	8·230	4·115
Hereford and Worcester	3·952	1·976
Hertfordshire	6·190	3·095
Humberside	9·036	4·518
Isle of Wight	1·454	0·727
Kent	18·510	9·255
Lancashire	9·366	4·683
Leicestershire	9·890	4·945
Lincolnshire	2·278	1·139
Norfolk	4·300	2·150
Northamptonshire	6·470	3·235
Northumberland	1·088	0·544
North Yorkshire	3·850	1·925
Nottinghamshire	4·074	2·037
Oxfordshire	1·426	0·713
Shropshire	3·500	1·750
Somerset	6·422	3·211
Staffordshire	5·644	2·822
Suffolk	3·506	1·753
Surrey	4·472	2·236
Warwickshire	3·492	1·746
West Sussex	5·460	2·730
Wiltshire	0·722	0·361
Total Shire Counties	210·874	105·437
Bolton	2·686	1·343
Bury	2·020	1·010
Manchester	6·290	3·145
Oldham	2·240	1·120
Rochdale	0·570	0·285
Salford	7·692	3·846
Stockport	0·360	0·180
Tameside	0·620	0·310
Trafford	1·284	0·642
Wigan	4·630	2·315
Total Greater Manchester Districts	28·392	14·196
Knowsley	0·484	0·242
Liverpool	2·470	1·235
St. Helens	1·270	0·635
Sefton	0·342	0·171
Wirral	2·460	1·230
Total Merseyside Districts	7·026	3·513
Barnsley	0·800	0·400
Doncaster	0·942	0·471
Rotherham	0·446	0·223
Sheffield	0·760	0·380
Total South Yorkshire Districts	2·948	1·474
Gateshead	3·990	1·995
Newcastle upon Tyne	4·570	2·285
North Tyneside	0·760	0·380
South Tyneside	0·720	0·360
Sunderland	3·154	1·577
Total Tyne and Wear Districts	13·194	6·597
Birmingham	7·806	3·903
Coventry	3·884	1·942
Dudley	1·384	0·692
Sandwell	1·834	0·917
Solihull	1·020	0·510
Walsall	3·156	1·578
Wolverhampton	6·922	3·461
Total West Midlands Districts	26·006	13·003
Bradford	3·372	1·686
Calderdale	0·420	0·210
Kirklees	2·638	1·319

Authority	Expenditure accepted for TSG	Grant
Leeds	3·046	1·523
Wakefield	0·526	0·263
Total West Yorkshire Districts	10·002	5·001
Total Metropolitan Districts	87·568	43·784
City of London	0·366	0·183
Barking and Dagenham	5·672	2·836
Barnet	0·800	0·400
Bexley	[illegible]98	0·649
Brent	[illegible]72	0·436
Bromley	7·766	3·883
Camden	0·262	0·131
Croydon	0·468	0·234
Ealing	3·876	1·938
Enfield	22·510	11·255
Greenwich	1·632	0·816
Hackney	0·854	0·427
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·130	0·065
Haringey	7·324	3·662
Harrow	7·156	3·578
Havering	0·640	0·320
Hillingdon	3·914	1·957
Hounslow	1·516	0·758
Islington	0·144	0·072
Kensington and Chelsea	0·138	0·069
Kingston upon Thames	0·662	0·331
Lambeth	0·494	0·247
Lewisham	1·940	0·970
Merton	5·058	2·529
Newham	0·686	0·343
Redbridge	0·806	0·403
Richmond upon Thames	0·372	0·186
Southwark	1·994	0·997
Sutton	1·556	0·778
Tower Hamlets	0·136	0·068
Waltham Forest	0·988	0·494
Wandsworth	1·108	0·554
Westminster	0·420	0·210
Total London	83·558	41·779
Total England	382·000	191·000

Tyres (Tread Depth)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has done on the relative safety and accident incidence of tyre tread depth of *(a)* 1 mm across the whole width of the tyre, *(b)* 1 mm across 75 per cent. of the tyre, *(c)* 1·6 mm across the whole width of the tyre and *(d)* 2 mm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has done research in this area for many years. TRRL Supplementary Report 672, published in 1981, describes work on braking force coefficients of worn tyres.

The results of work in 1985 on the effect of tread depth on wet cornering force coefficients of car tyres, was circulated to all organisations consulted as part of the review of the tyre tread depth regulations in 1986.

A copy of the working paper is being placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons (NATO)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to declassify and publish such information in the Annual Statement on the Defence Estimates as to enable accurate estimates to be made of the number and power of nuclear weapons deployed with NATO each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Homeless Families

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses and flats his Department owns in the Woolwich area; how many of these were unoccupied at the most recent convenient date; and how many have been made available to the London Borough of Greenwich for the temporary housing of homeless families.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence owns a total of 781 houses and flats in the Woolwich area. As at 26 November 1987, 21 houses were leased to the London Borough of Greenwich and 136 were vacant for the following reasons:

	Number
Undergoing Works Services	21
Allotted to servicemen	53
Awaiting Works Services	13
Awaiting furnishing	18
Otherwise vacant	31
Total	136

Air Letters

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the postal charges on the family only air letters available for service personnel in the Falkland Islands and on Ascension Island.

Mr. Freeman: No charges are payable by service men or their families for Forces air mail letters sent to or from the Falkland Islands or Ascension Island.

Jet Provost Aircraft

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Shorts of Belfast are contributing to the cost of maintaining the Royal Air Force's Jet Provost aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jet Provost aircraft are still in Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Freeman: The RAF at present has a fleet of 152 Jet Provosts.

Shorts Tucano

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Shorts of Belfast are paying any penalties to his Department for delays on delivery of the Shorts Tucano; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no fixed penalties for late deliveries, but because Shorts are not paid until the aircraft is delivered they have every incentive to reduce delays to a minimum.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents involving nuclear warheads, in which the accidental discharge of radioactive material was narrowly averted, have occurred in the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: There have been no such incidents involving United Kingdom nuclear weapons or United States nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years.

Body Scanning (Rosyth)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Rosyth dockyard employees have invoked their statutory right for whole-body scanning.

Mr. Sainsbury: Rosyth dockyard employees have no statutory right for whole body scanning. Prior to the introduction of commercial management, however, an agreement was reached with dockyard trade unions and staff associations that no person wishing to undergo whole body scanning would be refused that facility unreasonably. Following a pilot study in 1980-81 and up to 6 April 1987, a total of 81 Rosyth dockyard employees have undergone whole-body scanning, which was carried out at the western general hospital in Edinburgh. Since 6 April all matters concerning the health and safety at work of their employees have been the primary responsibility of the commercial managers.

Radiation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take to identify workers at risk from radiation, in the light of the recent report from the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am satisfied that all persons in my Department who are occupationally exposed to ionising radiations are known and that their working conditions are such that their exposure should not exceed the statutory limits. These are unchanged by the new NRPB guidelines in its interim guidance document following the ICRP 1987 Como statement. The records of exposure will allow any workers whose individual average exposures exceed the new guidelines to be identified.

Nuclear Warheads

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply, 13 November, *Official Report*, column 334, what is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy towards increases in the present deployment figure of 4,600 nuclear warheads in its European stockpile.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing to add to the reply which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave to the hon. Member on 13 November 1987 at column 334.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what consultations he is undertaking on the bringing forward of proposals for the establishment of a Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Wakeham: Consultations will take place, as necessary, with hon. Members and through the usual channels.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal when he expects to announce his conclusions on the ways in which the recent reports of the Procedure Committee might be brought before the House.

Mr. Wakeham: When the necessary consultations have been concluded.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what proposals he has to expedite the establishment of departmental Select Committees in the current and future Parliaments.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Member will be aware of the provision of time for a debate on Wednesday 2 December in the name of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection relating to the membership of departmental Select Committees. We have progressed as fast as we can and I am sure that future Parliaments will do likewise.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal in what circumstances he considers it appropriate for departmental Select Committees reports to be debated on a substantive motion.

Mr. Wakeham: When it is necessary in accordance with the general wish of the House.

Asbestos

Mr. Wray: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if any assessment has been made of the risk from asbestos to hon. Members and staff who are working in St. Stephen's House during the reconstruction of the buildings on Bridge street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I am advised by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), that all known asbestos was removed from the Bridge street phase I site before work started on the main contract in June. Subsequently two further areas of asbestos have been discovered. They were sealed off immediately. One has been dealt with and the other is receiving attention now. All the work has been carried out in accordance with regulations based on the report of the Health and Safety Executive asbestos working group. Air counts in the areas showed readings below the minimum safety level.

I am satisfied on the evidence that there has been no risk to the occupants of St. Stephen's House.

Waste Paper

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Lord Privy Seal how much stationery paper *(a)* by weight and *(b)* by value is consumed in the Palace of Westminster each year; what arrangements there are for recycling waste paper; and what is the value of this waste.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not possible to make any sensible estimate of either the weight or the value of stationery paper consumed in the Palace of Westminster. I understand that the removal of unclassified waste paper from the Palace of Westminster is carried out, under a contract arranged by HMSO, at no cost to public funds. No arrangements have thus been made by the House authorities for waste paper to be recycled.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Family Credit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why it is assumed under the family credit scheme that, on between £3,000 and £6,000 of capital, each £250 of capital will provide an income of £1 a week; and whether this rule will apply if it can be proved that such an income is not forthcoming.

Mr. Scott: The range of tariff income assumed in the family credit scheme — and in the other new income related benefits — on capital between £3,000 and £6,000 is not intended to represent a commercial rate of return. Indeed, at the lower end of the range, an assumed income of £1 a week on savings of £3,250 represents an actual rate of only 1·6 per cent. This provision seeks to strike a balance between encouraging thrift and the proper use of public funds, and we consider that those with savings between £3,000 and £6,000 can reasonably be expected to make a progressive contribution. The rule will apply regardless of the manner in which capital is invested.

AIDS

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the size of the health educational budget in 1986 relating to *(a)* AIDS and *(b)* heart disease.

Mrs. Currie: Prior to the establishment of the Health Education Authority in April 1987, funding for health education was allocated by the Government to the Health Education Council.

Details of the Health Education Council's spending on coronary heart disease and AIDS for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 is as follows:

	£
Coronary heart disease	
1985-86	1,030,108
1986-87	791,500
AIDS	
1985-86	68,000
1986-87	62,000

In addition, the Department has spent £539,000 in 1985-86 and £6,861,000 in 1986-87 on public education relating to AIDS and £420,000 in 1986-87 on the joint departmental/ Health Education Council "Look After Your Heart" campaign. Regional and district health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations have also spent substantial sums on both AIDS and heart disease education but there is no comprehensive central record of the sums involved.

Mr. Frank Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the National Health Service has considered taking legal action against those American companies who provided Factor 8 products infected with the AIDS virus.

Mr. Newton: The products in question were supplied to various health authorities. So far as is known legal action has not been taken by any of them.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people under 50 years of age died in 1986 from *(a)* AIDS and *(b)* heart disease.

Mr. Newton: As of 20 November 1987, of the cases of AIDS reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre from England and Wales, 182 were known to have died during 1986 and were aged under 50 years at time of death.

The number of deaths registered in England and Wales in 1986 where the underlying cause of death was stated as heart disease (International Classification of Diseases 9th revision 393-429) for persons aged under 50 years is 5,010.

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many recipients of *(a)* housing benefit, and *(b)* family income supplement receive more from these benefits than they are charged in income tax, national insurance contribution and local authority rates.

Mr. Scott: Approximately 1,900,000 standard housing benefit recipients, 80,000 people receiving both housing benefit and family income supplement and 30,000 recipients of family income supplement in Great Britain received more from these benefits in 1985 than they paid in income tax, national insurance contributions and local authority rates. Since these estimates assume that all tax payments and benefit receipts reported in the family expenditure survey are correct, the figures provide no more than broad orders of magnitude.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the transitional protection of supplementary benefit payments on the introduction of income support will include payments under regulation 22 of the urgent cases regulations.

Mr. Scott: Yes, provided the claimant satisfies the conditions of entitlement for income support and total benefit income under income support is less than that under the supplementary benefit scheme.

Leukaemia (Burghfield)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence is available to his Department of higher rates of leukaemia around his Department's establishment at Burghfield, Berkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Evidence on leukaemia rates in the area including the Ministry of Defence atomic weapons establishment at Burghfield is to be found in the following publications:

(a) 'Childhood leukaemia in West Berkshire' (Barton et al, Lancet November 1985);

(b) 'Leukaemia and lymphatic cancer in young people near nuclear installations' (Urquhart et al, Lancet February 1986):

(c) 'Childhood leukaemia in the West Berkshire and Basingstoke & North Hampshire District Health

Authorities in relation to nuclear establishments in the vicinity' (Roman et al, British Medical Journal, March 1987);

(d) 'Cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations, England and Wales 1959-80' (OPCS, 1987).

This evidence, together with other epidemiological and dosimetric information, is currently being considered by the independent Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Medicine Products

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many imported medicine products have been granted product licences (parallel imports) which differ in formulation from the products available in the United Kingdom under a full product licence; and if he will name those which are in the therapeutic fields of cardiovascular medicine, diabetes and epilepsy.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not readily available. However where the United Kingdom licensing authority is aware of differences in formulation between the imported medicinal product and that which is the subject of a full United Kingdom product licence, a product licence (parallel import) would be granted only if those differences were not considered to have therapeutic effect.

NHS (Administrative Staff)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of administrative and clerical staff employed in National Health Service hospitals in England and Wales for each of the years 1974 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Newton: The numbers of whole-time equivalent administrative and clerical staff (including general managers) employed in the National Health Service in England on 30 September in each year was as follows:

	Numbers
1974	82,800
1975	91,900
1976	98,500
1977	99,000
1978	100,300
1979	103,000
1980	105,400
1981	108,800
1982	108,800
1983	110,000
1984	110,300
1985	111,000
1986	111,400

These figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Separate figures for administrative and clerical staff employed in hospitals are not available.

Information on staff employed by the National Health Service in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Haemophilia Society to make the first payments from the newly established trust fund.

Mr. Newton: The Department is working closely with the Haemophilia Society over the establishment of the trust fund to ensure the first payments are made as soon as possible.

Disturbed Children (Diet)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning long-term experiments on disturbed children at Aycliffe community school, County Durham, by the British Society of Nutritional Medicine relating to diet and behaviour; what is the status of the Society; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Aycliffe school is a controlled community home. Responsibility for its management is shared between Durham county council and the Aycliffe school trust. I am advised that a study is proposed to assess whether there are observable differences in behaviour and learning associated with the provision of a balanced diet based on foods which have less sugar, salt and saturated fats but a higher fibre content than meals traditionally provided, as opposed to a diet not based on such foods. No individual food or food additive is to be investigated. An academic steering committee has been established to oversee the study and the study design will be subject to the approval of the research and ethical committees of Newcastle university and the South West Durham health authority. The study has not yet started.

If it proceeds, the study would be carried out in association with the British Society for Nutritional Medicine. I understand that the society is an association of doctors whose aim is to develop understanding of clinical nutrition. The society is providing funds for the cost of the research time and any additional food costs.

I have written to the chairman of the Durham county council social services committee asking him to give me the opportunity to see, in advance of the study being implemented, a copy of the academic steering committee's full description of the study, when it is available, together with the views of the research and ethical committees which are being consulted.

Balderton Hospital

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are currently in the Eastdale unit at Balderton hospital; and how many people are awaiting transfer to the unit.

Mrs. Currie: Two patients are in residence at the unit, and seven have been identified as potentially suitable for short periods of phased leave and observation there.

Agency Staff

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the number of agency staff employed by health authorities, *(b)* the number of agency nursing staff employed by health authorities and *(c)* the number of nursing and midwifery staff employed by health authorities, all in whole-time equivalents, for each quarter from June 1986 until June 1987; and what was the cost to health authorities of employing agency staff for the same period, in £ sterling.

Mr. Newton: Information about the number of agency staff, other than nursing and midwifery staff, employed by health authorities is not collected centrally.

The following table shows the number of nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency staff) for each quarter from March 1986 and March 1987, inclusive, and the number of agency nursing and midwifery staff over the same period. June 1987 data are not yet available.

NHS directly employed nursing and midwifery staff—England
[1] Whole-time equivalents

Staff in post	*Agency nursing and midwifery staff*	*All nursing and midwifery (excluding agency) staff*
31 March 1986	5,790	397,470
30 June 1986	4,970	396,990
30 September 1986	5,450	397,240
31 December 1986	4,150	394,470
31 March 1987	5,600	398,090

Source: DHSS Quarterly Counts of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

The Department collects information on the cost of agency staff to health authorities on a financial year basis only, via the annual accounts. The unaudited summarised accounts of health authorities in England for 1986-87 records total expenditure on the employment of non-National Health Service staff as £150 million.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the latest bed-occupancy, throughput and waiting list figures for health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows the latest information about bed occupancy, which is the average number of occupied beds as a percentage of the average number of available beds, and throughput, which is the number of in-patient cases treated per available bed. The latest waiting list information is contained in the bound volume of the hospital waiting lists for health authorities in England at 31 March 1987, a copy of which is in the Library.

Percentage of bed occupancy and throughput, NHS hospitals, 1986

Health authorities	*Percentage bed occupancy*	*Throughput*
Northern region	79·6	19·0
Hartlepool	67·9	29·5
North Tees	74·9	26·4
South Tees	74·2	28·9
East Cumbria	78·4	15·6
South Cumbria	79·3	24·1
West Cumbria	83·1	16·2
Darlington	81·7	15·6
Durham	79·9	15·8
North West Durham	77·6	22·0
South West Durham	85·1	9·9
Northumberland	85·8	8·0
Gateshead	83·7	15·6
Newcastle upon Tyne	80·3	25·2
North Tyneside	77·4	27·5
South Tyneside	81·7	21·5
Sunderland	70·7	21·5
Yorkshire region	78·4	20·5
Hull	76·2	25·7
East Yorkshire	66·9	14·2
Grimsby	79·0	25·2
Scunthorpe	72·1	27·8
Northallerton	72·3	22·8
York	81·6	14·3
Scarborough	78·2	32·6
Harrogate	71·1	21·2
Bradford	76·6	23·1
Airedale	76·4	16·1
Calderdale	75·2	20·4
Huddersfield	84·9	14·5
Dewsbury	79·0	27·7
Leeds Western	85·1	19·7
Leeds Eastern	83·4	24·4
Wakefield	78·8	13·8
Pontefract	74·1	25·8
Trent region	77·9	20·5
North Derbyshire	75·8	16·9
South Derbyshire	75·7	16·0
Leicestershire	80·0	19·9
North Lincolnshire	75·1	15·5
South Lincolnshire	76·2	18·3
Bassetlaw	74·9	25·4
Central Nottinghamshire	73·4	21·5
Nottingham	78·0	25·9
Barnsley	80·9	24·6
Doncaster	84·1	22·0
Rotherham	77·7	24·5
Sheffield	78·7	20·9
East Anglian Region	78·4	20·4
Cambridge	79·3	20·3
Peterborough	77·7	28·1
West Suffolk	77·4	20·3
East Suffolk	82·5	14·6
Norwich	78·4	18·2
Great Yarmouth	76·9	23·3
West Norfolk and Wisbech	71·0	24·4
Huntingdon	74·3	34·5
North West Thames Region	83·3	18·3
North Bedfordshire	82·7	19·8
South Bedfordshire	84·6	21·3
North Hertfordshire	84·1	28·6
East Hertfordshire	81·5	26·8
North West Hertfordshire	79·3	5·5
South West Hertfordshire	80·8	25·5
Barnet	86·8	15·4
Harrow	80·2	31·5
Hillingdon	81·9	29·7
Hounslow and Spelthorne	83·7	28·1
Ealing	90·3	13·0
Brent	83·5	11·9
Paddington and North Kensington	80·6	29·7
Riverside	86·9	18·8
North East Thames Region	84·3	20·4
Basildon and Thurrock	85·5	17·6
Mid Essex	77·4	22·2
North East Essex	84·6	15·1
West Essex	84·0	23·0
Southend	82·8	20·0
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	85·5	17·0
Hampstead	85·4	14·2
Bloomsbury	80·3	32·1
Islington	80·0	33·0
City and Hackney	85·3	24·0
Newham	88·8	26·1
Tower Hamlets	88·4	26·4
Enfield	83·7	22·4
Haringey	83·7	22·1
Redbridge	88·7	12·8
Waltham Forest	84·3	16·1
South East Thames Region	81·6	26·3
Brighton	80·6	25·8
Eastbourne	79·7	18·7
Hastings	75·6	24·4
South East Kent	81·9	29·5

Health authorities	Percentage bed occupancy	Throughput
Canterbury and Thanet	75·7	18·6
Dartford and Gravesham	82·0	15·0
Maidstone	79·4	14·4
Medway	69·2	35·2
Tunbridge Wells	81·9	16·5
Bexley	83·3	14·6
Greenwich	81·9	27·3
Bromley	84·2	15·3
West Lambeth	93·2	19·0
Camberwell	84·7	30·2
Lewisham and North Southwark	83·1	29·6
South West Thames Region	84·4	16·4
North West Surrey	84·3	16·3
West Surrey and North East Hants	88·3	14·6
South West Surrey	82·3	28·8
Mid Surrey	86·1	8·5
East Surrey	82·5	11·2
Chichester	85·4	17·1
Mid Downs	77·3	17·6
Worthing	84·3	28·5
Croydon	86·1	13·1
Kingston and Esher	90·7	18·0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	82·8	20·9
Wandsworth	85·0	19·9
Merton and Sutton	81·9	15·6
Wessex Region	79·0	21·3
East Dorset	79·7	24·6
West Dorset	79·5	14·6
Portsmouth	79·3	22·5
South West Hants and Southampton	80·3	24·2
Winchester	81·0	25·0
Basingstoke	78·4	16·4
Salisbury	80·8	20·2
Swindon	77·0	22·7
West Wiltshire and Bath	77·7	19·0
Isle of Wight	74·6	23·0
Oxford Region	79·0	24·5
East Berkshire	81·7	26·1
West Berkshire	80·0	22·0
Aylesbury	77·8	17·2
Wycombe	78·8	30·9
Milton Keynes	76·2	37·1
Kettering	77·9	29·3
Northampton	80·6	19·4
Oxfordshire	77·1	27·3
South Western Region	78·9	19·6
Bristol and Weston	75·2	29·5
Frenchay	83·3	9·0
Southmead	80·6	21·8
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	82·4	17·2
Exeter	75·6	16·9
North Devon	72·6	26·1
Plymouth	74·3	26·7
Torbay	77·7	26·0
Cheltenham	74·9	26·7
Gloucester	80·0	19·3
Somerset	82·4	14·1
West Midlands Region	80·5	20·9
Bromsgrove and Redditch	77·2	17·3
Herefordshire	73·5	21·2
Kidderminster and District	84·0	12·8
Worcester and District	78·2	21·3
Shropshire	76·4	22·2
Mid Staffordshire	83·4	20·3
North Staffordshire	82·4	18·2
South East Staffordshire	78·2	14·4
Rugby	65·8	31·6
North Warwickshire	80·3	16·3
South Warwickshire	79·0	13·5
Central Birmingham	84·1	30·5
East Birmingham	86·5	30·2
North Birmingham	85·8	20·0
South Birmingham	82·9	17·6
West Birmingham	83·7	18·9
Coventry	79·2	27·7
Dudley	76·2	25·0
Sandwell	78·1	28·6
Solihull	77·3	20·0
Walsall	85·1	17·9
Wolverhampton	78·6	26·9
Mersey Region	82·9	18·8
Chester	79·0	17·8
Crewe	78·0	17·7
Halton	83·7	16·0
Macclesfield	83·4	9·2
Warrington	87·7	10·7
Liverpool	81·2	27·2
St. Helens and Knowsley	84·3	14·8
Southport and Formby	85·4	13·4
South Sefton	83·7	27·6
Wirral	82·3	24·9
North Western Region	80·2	22·0
Lancaster	85·7	11·0
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	86·2	21·9
Preston	81·0	19·4
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	81·9	16·1
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	76·8	13·9
West Lancashire	76·1	22·3
Chorley and South Ribble	80·9	12·9
Bolton	79·0	28·3
Bury	77·1	27·1
North Manchester	79·4	23·7
Central Manchester	79·5	37·1
South Manchester	79·5	31·9
Oldham	73·8	28·8
Rochdale	72·8	27·2
Salford	81·2	16·4
Stockport	81·7	21·6
Tameside and Glossop	81·3	29·1
Trafford	81·9	23·7
Wigan	76·9	26·1
Special Health Authorities	77·8	30·3
The Hospital For Sick Children	72·9	37·9
National Hospitals For Nervous Diseases	75·7	19·1
Moorfields Eye Hospital	67·8	71·7
Bethlehem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	80·2	5·4
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	79·4	34·2
The Royal Marsden Hospital	77·1	34·6
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	80·7	35·0
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—	—

NHS Staff (Assaults)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Burnley of 9 November, *Official Report*, column *88*, he will ask for a report from each regional health authority on the numbers of attacks by members of the public on National Health Service employees in their hospitals for each of the last five years, giving in each case the nature of the employment of persons attacked.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested.

We are naturally concerned that everything possible is done to ensure that all staff working in the health and

personal social services are protected against violence. Much good work is already being done by health authorities. Measures include employment of contract security staff, installation of closed circuit television, panic buttons, shriek alarms, two-way radios, improved lighting and decor and the introduction of professional nurse triage to reduce waiting times in accident and emergency departments.

However, it is often difficult for managers to monitor the situation and take effective preventive measures because, for a variety of reasons, not all incidents of violence are reported. The DHSS advisory committee on violence to staff, which under the chairmanship of my noble Friend, has been charged with pooling and disseminating knowledge and experience to ensure that measures taken to protect staff are as effective as possible, is considering reporting standards and systems which may be developed by managers in the light of local circumstances. The committee hopes to report to my right hon. Friend by early spring.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid out from the Burnley supplementary benefit office in single payments in each of the last five years; and what is the proposed budget for the year commencing April 1988 for social fund expenditure.

Mr. Scott: I am arranging for the information available on annual single payment expenditure by individual local offices to be placed in the Library. Information on the allocation of social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81*.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *252*, if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of non-caller claims for supplementary benefit received in the last four-week period for which records are available and the percentage of non-caller claims awaiting a decision at the end of that four-week period; and if he will supply this information in respect of *(a)* his Department's offices in the Greater London area, *(b)* London north region and *(c)* London south region;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *252*, if he will give average waiting times for a decision from the date of the claim on supplementary benefit claims for his Department's offices in Barking, Barnet, Canning Town, Cricklewood, Ealing, Edgware, Edmonton, Euston, Finsbury Park, Hackney, Harlesden, Hendon, Highgate, Hoxton, Leytonstone, Neasden, Notting Hill, Paddington, Poplar, Shoreditch, Southall, Stepney, Stoke Newington, Tottenham, Walthamstow, Woodgrange Park, Wood Green, Balham, Brixton, Camberwell, Croydon, Crystal Palace, Dartford, Greenwich Park, Hither Green, Hounslow, Kennington Park, Kensington, Lewisham, Mitcham, Oval and Peckham, and for the London north region and the London south region;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of items of post received each week and the number of items of unlinked post over two days old; if he will supply this information in respect of his Department's offices in *(a)* Stoke Newington, *(b)* Hackney and *(c)* Finsbury Park; and how many other of his Department's offices in London north and London south have a greater backlog of items of unlinked post.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The tables set out the information requested where it is available, for the four-week period up to 20 October 1987. The data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Local offices/ Regions	*Supplementary benefit*	*Non-caller Claims*	
	Average clearance Times (working days)	*Received*	*Outstanding as a percentage of available*
Offices in the Greater London Area	7	55,881	29
London North Region	7	56,998	28
London South Region	7	55,465	26

Local offices/Regions	*Supplementary benefit Average clearance Times (working days)*
Balham	5
Barking	6
Barnet	9
Brixton	8
Camberwell	17
Canning Town	10
Cricklewood	12
Croydon	12
Crystal Palace	9
Dartford	4
Ealing	11
Edgware	5
Edmonton	12
Euston	10
Finsbury Park	16
Greenwich Park	6
Hackney	5
Harlesden	15
Hendon	9
Highgate	11
Hither Green	3
Hounslow	6
Hoxton	3
Kennington Park	8
Kensington	10
Lewisham	13
Leytonstone	6
Mitcham	10
Neasden	7
Notting Hill	12
Oval	7
Paddington	8
Peckham	9
Poplar	6
Shoreditch	5
Southall	13
Stepney	9
Stoke Newington	12
Tottenham	9
Walthamstow	7
Woodgrange Park	7
Wood Green	6

The number of items of post received each week is not collected. The Regions referred to collect details of unlinked post over two days old and the information requested is as follows.

Local office	Unlinked post over two days old
Hackney	306
Finsbury Park	1,870
Stoke Newington	1,108

These figures include internal correspondence as well as correspondence from the public.

The number of offices in London North and London South regions with a greater backlog are as follows:

(i) More than Hackney—
London North—7 local offices
London South—14 local offices

(ii) More than Stoke Newington—
London North—3 local offices
London South—5 local offices

(iii) More than Finsbury Park—
London North—0 local offices
London South—2 local offices

Offices vary considerably in size and no reasonable comparisons can be made.

Birth Statistics

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year from 1975 onwards, the numbers of livebirths, stillbirths, early neonatal deaths, late neonatal deaths and postneonatal deaths of legitimate and jointly registered illegitimate babies in England and Wales with fathers whose occupations were classified as *(a)* social class I, *(b)* social class II, *(c)* social class III non-manual, *(d)* social class III manual, *(e)* social class IV, *(f)* social class V, *(g)* armed services and *(h)* students, unoccupied and any occupations not included in *(a)* to *(g)*.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the tables show readily available statistics on infant and perinatal mortality.

Numbers of livebirths, stillbirths, early and late neonatal deaths and postneonatal deaths, legitimate and illegitimate births, and by social class for legitimate births only—England and Wales

Social Class[1]	Livebirths	Stillbirths	Deaths		
			Early Neonatal	Late Neonatal	Post-neonatal
1975 Legitimate					
I	42,000	304	281	57	127
II	99,700	832	731	117	324
III non-manual	57,000	505	417	85	200
III manual	214,200	2,268	1,825	325	949
IV	84,700	1,023	814	164	485
V	27,200	405	341	61	237
Other[2]	23,800	242	260	47	178
Illegitimate	54,891	716	752	131	415
Total	603,445	6,295	5,421	987	2,915
1976 Legitimate					
I	40,900	298	227	52	107
II	99,900	795	646	125	280
III non-manual	55,500	499	372	77	171
III manual	204,600	2,009	1,533	284	827
IV	85,000	925	726	142	431
V	25,200	335	301	51	211
Other[2]	19,400	161	266	46	171
Illegitimate	53,766	687	636	114	384
Total	584,270	5,709	4,707	891	2,582
1977 Legitimate					
I	41,800	281	209	45	120
II	100,500	696	623	128	305
III non-manual	53,200	432	322	83	172
III manual	193,500	1,940	1,398	305	712
IV	81,400	872	672	156	408
V	25,200	313	249	42	202
Other[2]	18,400	172	232	54	160
Illegitimate	55,379	599	607	106	401
Total	513,900	5,405	4,312	919	2,480
1978					
Legitimate					
I	45,400	287	256	53	135
II	105,100	717	584	154	326
III non-manual	54,600	411	354	77	177
III manual	202,100	1,737	1,350	294	855
IV	86,100	801	649	151	374
V	25,400	310	213	44	181
Other[2]	17,100	146	205	40	152

Social Class[1]	Livebirths	Stillbirths	Deaths Early Neonatal	Deaths Late Neonatal	Deaths Post-neonatal
Illegitimate	60,637	699	594	122	390
Total	535,781	5,108	4,205	935	2,590
1979					
Legitimate					
I	38,600	200	200	51	129
II	121,600	771	671	164	341
III non-manual	60,200	413	359	72	157
III manual	209,300	1,715	1,311	258	813
IV	88,600	835	644	162	464
V	32,600	316	299	49	263
Other[2]	17,700	160	140	31	159
Illegitimate	69,467	715	653	152	522
Total	568,600	5,125	4,277	939	2,848
1980					
Legitimate					
I	40,800	204	194	38	132
II	123,600	745	632	155	384
III non-manual	61,900	387	345	72	212
III manual	212,300	1,576	1,213	303	748
IV	87,700	708	616	145	424
V	32,700	313	247	72	204
Other[2]	19,900	144	156	45	162
Illegitimate	77,372	696	620	134	537
Total	578,862	4,773	4,023	964	2,803
1981					
Legitimate					
I	41,100	190	150	39	128
II	122,100	682	510	124	329
III non-manual	60,300	335	258	75	181
III manual	198,300	1,302	1,026	248	777
IV	79,900	576	486	140	384
V	31,600	280	215	60	223
Other[2]	20,200	146	122	36	145
Illegitimate	80,983	697	546	141	542
Total	553,509	4,207	3,314	862	2,709
1982 Legitimate					
I	40,700	177	153	28	107
II	118,000	599	473	129	390
III non-manual	58,000	334	270	64	193
III manual	190,000	1,200	880	198	734
IV	78,500	590	452	112	363
V	30,800	249	203	42	201
Other[2]	20,200	132	126	34	143
Illegitimate	89,857	657	564	162	642
Total	536,076	3,939	3,121	769	2,773
1983 Legitimate					
I	39,200	166	120	28	96
II	116,800	560	436	102	353
III non-manual	57,100	279	239	60	166
III manual	188,300	1,059	816	215	694
IV	76,400	535	420	105	393
V	31,200	221	179	39	182
Other[2]	20,800	93	126	32	161
Illegitimate	99,211	718	594	142	586
Total	529,923	3,631	2,930	723	2,631
1984 Legitimate					
I	39,600	157	125	39	88
II	115,200	507	411	105	305
III non-manual	57,600	267	205	55	180

Social Class[1]	Livebirths	Stillbirths	Deaths Early Neonatal	Deaths Late Neonatal	Deaths Post-neonatal
III manual	185,500	997	837	193	593
IV	76,400	515	377	103	308
V	29,900	256	169	45	170
Other[2]	22,100	126	93	30	149
Illegitimate	110,465	818	580	148	637
Total	526,353	3,643	2,797	718	2,430
1985 Legitimate					
I	40,000	162	149	38	95
II	118,400	485	411	92	335
III non-manual	56,200	291	204	53	144
III manual	184,300	982	724	178	592
IV	75,400	477	362	96	301
V	30,500	221	161	30	158
Other[2]	25,300	155	143	38	156
Illegitimate	126,250	872	664	146	757
Total	530,167	3,645	2,818	671	2,538

[1] The legitimate livebirths for each social class are estimated numbers only, based on a 10 per cent. sample.
[2] Includes armed forces, students, unoccupied and not stated.
From 1975 to 1978, social class is derived from 1970 Classification of Occupations, and between 1979 and 1985 from the 1980 Classification.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the reasons for the differences between the allocations to the family practitioner committees in east and west Sussex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Resources available to individual family practitioner committees were the subject of local negotiation with health authorities when, in 1985, family practitioner committees became independent of health authorities. It is widely recognised that this led to some inequities. For this reason, the Department, in a phased programme, has sought to redistribute resources in a more objective way based on criteria relating to major aspects affecting workload. Under this process east Sussex family practitioner committee has gained this year a higher proportion of the total available resources both absolutely and relative to west Sussex family practitioner committee. No final decisions have yet been made about allocations for 1988-89.

Correspondence (Welsh Language)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what guidance has been given to officials within his Department regarding correspondence addressed to them by individuals and bodies in Wales in the Welsh language;

(2) what is his policy towards answering in the Welsh language letters written by individuals and bodies in Wales in the Welsh language to offices of his Department situated outside Wales.

Mr. Portillo: Local office staff in Wales will reply in Welsh to letters received in that language. Some social security benefits are administered centrally outside Wales. Correspondence from Wales in the Welsh language to any of these central locations would normally receive an answer in Welsh.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities the various divisions within his Department have for dealing with correspondence addressed to them by individuals and bodies in Wales in the Welsh language.

Mr. Portillo: There are Welsh-speaking staff in most social security offices in Wales and in predominantly Welsh-speaking areas the proportion is higher.

If a letter cannot be processed locally, the Welsh Office provides a translation service for all offices of the Department. In addition, the Department retains an agency to provide translations to and from English for all the major languages, including Welsh.

Sheltered Accommodation (Alarm Systems)

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy regarding the payment of grants to cover the cost of installing alarm systems in local authority sheltered accommodation and schemes designed for elderly people.

Mrs. Currie: The provision of alarm systems is a matter for local authorities and landlords. We have no plans to make grants from central funds for this purpose.

Local housing authorities have a wide range of powers under which they can provide alarm systems not only in their own housing stock but also in the community as a whole, whether or not the housing is specially designed for elderly people. Local social service authorities also have powers to supply and meet the costs of warning devices including alarms in sheltered housing and other accommodation in the public, voluntary and private sectors. It is for housing and social services authorities to decide what resources should be devoted to alarm systems from the total resources available to them.

Clinical Waste

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department provides to district health authorities and county councils as to the division of responsibilities between them in the handling and disposal of clinical waste.

Mrs. Currie: Guidance on the safe disposal of clinical waste was issued to district and regional health authorities in 1982 under cover of Health Notice HN(82)22. This does not specify any particular division of responsibility; that is a matter best resolved between the operational authorities concerned.

Mental Hospitals (Ex-inmates)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the payment of social security benefit to ex-inmates of National Health Service mental hospitals, now transferred to private residential homes, is affected by local health authority payments to provide for the care of those ex-inmates.

Mr. Portillo: Under section 23(1) of the National Health Service Act 1977 a health authority may make arrangements with the proprietors of a private residential home for a NHS hospital patient to be accommodated and cared for in the home instead. In these circumstances the patient's entitlement to benefit is not affected by the transfer: benefit is payable at the same rate as if the patient were still in hospital.

Agency Nurses

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority in England and Wales its outlay on agency nurses for the latest financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Following are provisional — as yet unaudited—figures from the annual accounts of health authorities in England.

Questions about health authorities in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Expenditure on non-NHS staff (agency etc.)—Nursing

	1986-87 £
Northern	
Regional Health Authority	9,119
District Health Authorities:	
Hartlepool	27,923
North Tees	—
South Tees	—
East Cumbria	—
South Cumbria	—
West Cumbria	—
Darlington	—
Durham	—
North West Durham	—
South West Durham	—
Northumberland	—
Gateshead	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	—
North Tyneside	3,519
South Tyneside	4,763
Sunderland	—
Region Total	45,324
Yorkshire	
Regional Health Authority	6,309
District Health Authorities:	
Hull	33,090
East Yorks	5,695
Grimsby	—
Scunthorpe	—
Northallerton	—
York	—
Scarborough	275,909
Harrogate	6,615
Bradford	106,965
Airedale	—
Calderdale	—
Huddersfield	—
Dewsbury	—
Leeds Western	357,453
Leeds Eastern	446,994
Wakefield	—
Pontefract	—
Region Total	1,239,030
Trent	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities:	
North Derbyshire	—
South Derbyshire	—
Leicestershire	11,553
North Lincolnshire	3,170
South Lincolnshire	3,636
Bassetlaw	—
Central Nottinghamshire	—
Nottingham	6,304
Barnsley	—
Doncaster	129,507
Rotherham	—
Sheffield	3,126
Region Total	157,296
East Anglian	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities:	—
Cambridge	664,086
Peterborough	198,418
West Suffolk	4,553
East Suffolk	25,988
Norwich	622,285
Great Yarmouth	167,444
West Norfolk and Wisbech	284,557
Huntingdon	57,250
Region Total	2,024,581
North West Thames	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities	—
North Bedfordshire	207
South Bedfordshire	111,659
North Hertfordshire	199,718
East Hertfordshire	242,393
North West Hertfordshire	222,527
South West Hertfordshire	531,657
Barnet	1,432,868
Harrow	1,267,046
Hillingdon	1,526,023
Hounslow and Spelthorne	2,002,673
Ealing	337,476
Brent	1,207,244
Paddington	2,370,432
Riverside	4,056,499
Region Total	15,508,422
North East Thames	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities	—
Basildon and Thurrock	560,161
Mid Essex	559,114
North East Essex	84,426
West Essex	478,906
Southend	691,564

	1986-87 £
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	378,802
Hampstead	1,349,503
Bloomsbury	4,745,219
Islington	777,354
City and Hackney	2,123,687
Newham	1,444,239
Tower Hamlets	1,365,551
Enfield	954,921
Haringey	1,433,658
Redbridge	771,162
Waltham Forest	1,580,540
Region Total	19,298,807
South East Thames	
Regional Health Authority	24,011
District Health Authorities	
Brighton	882,130
Eastbourne	522,100
Hastings	98,421
South East Kent	199,841
Canterbury & Thanet	584,661
Dartford & Gravesham	758,412
Maidstone	466,874
Medway	203,689
Tunbridge Wells	671,782
Bexley	240,775
Greenwich	799,327
Bromley	946,556
West Lambeth	1,648,359
Camberwell	1,797,873
Lewisham & North Southwark	1,882,684
Region Total	11,727,495
South West Thames	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities	
North West Surrey	519,334
West Surrey & North East Hants	803,363
South West Surrey	471,817
Mid Surrey	225,144
East Surrey	747,873
Chichester	94,420
Mid Downs	140,845
Worthing	444,352
Croydon	343,861
Kingston & Esher	575,102
Richmond, Twickenham & Roehampton	911,998
Wandsworth	2,510,595
Merton & Sutton	588,650
Region 8,377,354	
Wessex	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities	
East Dorset	449,749
West Dorset	57,270
Portsmouth & South East Hants	32,794
Southampton & South West Hants	273,317
Winchester	149,215
Basingstoke & North Hants	221,654
Salisbury	109,389
Swindon	115,663
Bath	—
Isle of Wight	—
Region Total	1,409,051
Oxford	
Regional Health Authority	8,794
District Health Authorities:	
East Berkshire	358,770
West Berkshire	496,669

	1986-87 £
Aylesbury	371,464
Wycombe	9,064
Milton Keynes	91,762
Kettering	14,590
Northampton	—
Oxford	13,026
Region Total	1,364,139
South Western	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities:	
Bristol and Weston	112,056
Frenchay	50,241
Southmead	6,538
Cornwall	3,880
Exeter	212,136
North Devon	3,395
Plymouth	2,680
Torbay	37,055
Cheltenham	105,435
Gloucester	—
Somerset	19,238
Region Total	552,654
West Midlands	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities:	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	108,122
Hereford	15,271
Kidderminster	—
Worcester	191,912
Shropshire	21,567
Mid Staffordshire	10,210
North Staffordshire	—
South East Staffordshire	511
Rugby	63,850
North Warwickshire	28,269
South Warwickshire	39,834
Central Birmingham	400,071
East Birmingham	301,405
North Birmingham	112,289
South Birmingham	285,777
West Birmingham	304,732
Coventry	28,195
Dudley	133,513
Sandwell	180,224
Solihull	—
Walsall	14,799
Wolverhampton	34,422
Region Total	2,274,973
Mersey	
Regional Health Authority	4,920
District Health Authorities	
Chester	—
Crewe	33,314
Halton	112,017
Macclesfield	50,063
Warrington	—
Liverpool	551,626
St. Helens and Knowsley	—
Southport and Formby	8,307
South Sefton	401
Wirral	—
Regional total	760,648
North western	
Regional Health Authority	—
District Health Authorities	
Lancaster	—
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	—
Preston	—

	1986-87 £
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale—	
West Lancashire	—
Chorley and South Ribble	—
Bolton	115,635
Bury	1,651
North Manchester	—
Central Manchester	88,542
South Manchester	—
Oldham	3,134
Rochdale	—
Salford	1,764
Stockport	—
Tameside and Glossop	—
Trafford	—
Wigan	—
Regional total	210,726
Special Health Authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals	
Hospitals for Sick Children	1,405,078
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	1,171,056
Moorfields Eye Hospital	645,679
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	75,617
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	787,255
Royal Marsden Hospital	201,995
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospitals	1,518,411
Eastman Dental Hospitals	31,934
Total	5,837,025
Total (England)	70,787,525

District Health Authorities

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by each district health authority within the Mersey region of the percentage of the total budget which is spent upon administration.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information derived from the 1986-87 annual accounts of the relevant health authorities:—

Revenue expenditure on headquarters administration as a proportion of total revenue expenditure

District health authority	Per cent.
Chester	3·46
Crewe	3·64
Halton	5·23
Macclesfield	3·20
Warrington	3·18
Liverpool	2·92
St. Helens and Knowsley	3·44
Southport and Formby	4·68
South Sefton	3·27
Wirral	2·66

Note:—Expenditure on headquarters administration includes the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines employed at district headquarters level and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit level: such costs are regarded as operational.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the extent to which the population of each district health authority in the Mersey region has altered over the last five year period for which figures are available and over the last 10 year period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Health authority	Estimated resident population at mid year 1976	1981	1986	Change 1976-86 Number	Percentage	Change 1981-86 Number	Percentage
Chester	182,400	178,900	177,700	−4,700	−2·6	−1,200	−0·7
Crewe	240,100	244,700	246,700	6,600	2·7	2,000	0·8
Halton	130,900	142,000	142,500	11,600	8·9	500	0·4
Macclesfield	174,800	175,600	178,900	4,100	2·3	3,300	1·9
Warrington	165,200	171,400	181,600	16,400	9·9	10,200	6·0
Liverpool	551,000	516,700	483,000	−68,000	−12·3	−33,700	−6·5
St. Helens and Knowsley	382,800	364,200	351,800	−31,00	−8·1	−12,400	−3·4
Southport and Formby	112,300	115,500	118,200	5,900	5·2	2,700	2·3
South Sefton	193,600	184,900	179,900	−13,700	−7·1	−5,000	−2·7
Wirral	364,800	360,600	353,800	−11,000	−3·0	−6,800	−1·9
Mersey regional health authority	2,497,900	2,454,500	2,414,100	−83,800	−3·4	−40,000	−1·6

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in (*a*) the Yorkshire region and (*b*) the area covered by the Pontefract district health authority, have died from cervical cancer in the last five years for which figures are available, expressed per thousand women.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table.

Numbers and rates per 1,000 women of deaths from malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD(9) 180[1]) to usual residents of Yorkshire Regional Health Authority and Pontefract District Health Authority, 1982-1986

Year	Yorkshire RHA Number	Rate	Pontefract DHA Number	Rate
1982	159	0·09	5	0·06
1983	168	0·09	5	0·06
1984	165	0·09	9	0·10
1985	177	0·10	8	0·09
1986	150	0·08	14	0·16

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision.

NHS Funding

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the extra funding outlined in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement for the National Health Service is to be made available to regional health authorities; and what the amount will be for the Yorkshire region.

Mrs. Currie: Health authority allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly. This year allocations to the Yorkshire regional health authority have totalled £807 million.

Pontefract District Health Authority

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the chairman of the Pontefract district health authority regarding that authority's financial difficulties and the need for funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The district general manager wrote to the Department on 15 October on behalf of Pontefract health authority seeking a meeting. However it is regional health authorities which are responsible for the distribution of resources to their districts and the line of accountability is from districts to regions. The Pontefract health authority has therefore been advised to discuss the matter with Yorkshire regional health authority.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the 1986-87 half-yearly overspend/underspend position of the Yorkshire regional health authority, broken down into districts;

(2) if he will detail, for each year since 1973, the average level of debt owned to the National Health Service by the private medicine sector *(a)* in the Yorkshire region and *(b)* in the Pontefract district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority who may be able to assist with the information he seeks.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the cost to the National Health Service of the proposed increase in electricity charges in *(a)* the Yorkshire region and *(b)* the Pontefract district health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has announced plans which will result in increases in electricity prices over a two-year period beginning in April 1988. An accurate assessment of the effect of those increases on individual health authorities cannot be made from information held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the authorities he mentions.

Nursing (Training)

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make it his policy to encourage young people entering nursing to take a degree course alongside their ward training by placing them on the same financial basis as those on traditional courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The United Kingdom Central Council's proposals for the reform of nurse education and training are currently being considered by the Department. Officials are also discussing the possible expansion of nursing degree courses with their opposite numbers in the Department of Education and Science, as existing degree courses are oversubscribed.

Anti-flu Vaccine (Hull)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the level provision and availability of the anti-flu vaccine in the Hull area.

Mrs. Currie: No. As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) on 24 November at column 124, supplies of flu vaccine this winter will be increased to 2·2 million doses by next week. This is substantially above the level (1·6 million doses) for last winter. We have no medical or scientific evidence that a flu epidemic is likely this winter. Vaccination of the general public is not recommended.

Low Income Workers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on low income workers contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead of 15 January 1986, *Official Report*, columns 593-96.

Mr. Scott: Estimates, which exclude families and single people paying higher rates of income tax, are shown in the table. Although the main assumptions used are similar to those used in the tables on the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" published at the time of the uprating statement on 27 October, these marginal rates assume that employees' national insurance contributions are paid at a rate of 9 per cent. Insofar as some employees' contributions are at the lower rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent., the estimates are too high. They therefore provide only broad orders of magnitude.

Total marginal rate of deduction (per cent.) per £1 of gross earnings	*Hypothetical "current scheme" 1988-89*	*Reformed system 1988-89*
50p but less than 60p	50,000	0
60p but less than 70p	90,000	[1]—
70p but less than 80p	0	95,000
80p but less than 90p	160,000	380,000
90p but less than 100p	45,000	70,000
100p and over	70,000	0

[1]— Means less than 5,000.

Notes:

1 Heads of tax-units only.

2 Figures are for Great Britain.

Social Fund

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much the community care grant element of the social fund allocated to each of his Department's offices at Camberwell, Peckham, Kennington and Southwark falls short of the amounts paid out in grants in 1985-86, 1986-87 and the projected amount for 1987-88 at those offices;

(2) by how much the total budget for the social fund in terms of loans and grants exceeds or falls short of the

amounts paid out in single payments and urgent needs payments in 1985-86, 1986-87 and the projected amount for 1987-88 at his Department's offices at Camberwell, Peckham, Kennington and Southwark.

Mr. Scott: I shall arrange for the information requested on expenditure in 1985-86 and 1986-87 to be placed in the Library. Projections for expenditure on single payments and urgent needs payments in 1987-88 are not broken down by local office. Provisional outturn figures for 1987-88 on an office-by-office basis are likely to be available in July 1988. Information on the social fund allocations to local offices was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at column *774-81*.

Supplementary Benefit Offices

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amounts were paid out by each of the supplementary benefit offices at Camberwell, Peckham, Kennington and Southwark in the form of (i) single payments and (ii) urgent needs payments: *(a)* from April 1985 to March 1986 inclusive, *(b)* from April 1986 to March 1987 inclusive and *(c)* from April 1987 to October 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Portillo: Information about urgent needs payments is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about single payments is given in the table.

	1985-86 £	[1] *1986-87* £	[1] *1987-88* £
Camberwell	984,046	776,020	194,137
Kennington Park	635,363	890,817	160,327
Oval	767,232	1,195,186	271,296
Peckham	489,277	642,472	170,803
Southwark	596,767	912,423	189,348

Note:
Information for the periods requested is not available. The information given is for the periods 10 April 1985 to 8 April 1986, 9 April 1986 to 7 April 1987 and 8 April 1987 to 20 October 1987.

[1] The figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Social Security Offices (Wales)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish in the *Official Report* the proposed budget under the social fund he has allocated to his social security offices *(i)* in Mid Glamorgan and (ii) in other Welsh counties.

Mr. Scott: I announced the social fund budget allocations to individual local offices for 1988-89 in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-781*.

Local offices situated in Mid-Glamorgan are:
- Aberdare ILO
- Bargoed ILO
- Bridgend ILO
- Caerphilly ILO
- Merthyr Tydfil ILO
- Pontypridd ILO
- Porth ILO
- Rhondda West ILO

The other local offices in Wales are:
- Abertillery ILO
- Aberystwth ILO
- Ammanford Group
- Anglesey ILO
- Barry ILO
- Blackwood ILO
- Caenarfon ILO
- Cardiff Central ILO
- Cardiff East ILO
- Cardiff West ILO
- Carmarthen ILO
- Colwyn Bay ILO
- Cwmbran Group
- Ebbw Vale Group
- Haverfordwest ILO
- Llanelli ILO
- Morriston ILO
- Neath ILO
- Newport ILO
- Newtown ILO
- Pembroke Dock ILO
- Porthmadog/Dolgellau ILO
- Port Talbot ILO
- Rhyl ILO
- Swansea ILO
- Wrexham Group

General Practitioners

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to monitor the increased workloads of general practitioners and their consequential effects; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps are being taken to alleviate the adverse effects of increased workloads on general practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Each year the Government determine the intended average net remuneration for general medical practitioners on advice from the independent Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body which takes into account, amongst other things, evidence on workload, the increase in the number of general medical practitioners and the reducing average list size.

Last year the health Departments and the profession submitted a report of a joint survey into general medical practitioners' workload which the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body welcomed and took into account.

National Health Service Employees

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to investigate stress amongst National Health Service employees striving to maintain the quality of health care in the face of increased demands on the service they provide; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The degree and nature of stress in employment differs according to circumstances and we believe it is right that we should look primarily to health authorities as employers to discharge their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act 1974, to promote, maintain and improve the physical and mental well-being of all employees. We have no plans to institute a further study into that area.

Dental and Optical Test Charges

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of people who will be exempt from dental and optical test charges.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the various categories of people who *(a)* are exempt from prescription charges at present and *(b)* will be exempt from eye-testing and dental inspection charges under the proposed legislation, stating the potential numbers of each category and showing what percentage of the population these exemptions represent.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available in respect of all categories of exemption from prescription charges. The table gives the available information expressed as percentages of the take-up of the relevant services.

Prescription charge exemptions

	Mid 1986 figures		*January-December 1986*	
	Number of people (thousands)	*Percentage of population*	*Number of prescription items (millions)*	*Percentage of total*
Men over 65 and women over 60	8,624·2	18·0	129·6	40·0
Children under 16	9,606·4	20·0	36·6	11·0
Persons receiving:				
(i) Supplementary Allowance	[1]3,390·0	7·7	[2]36·3	11·0
(ii) Family Income Supplement	[1]260·0			
Pregnant and nursing mothers and patients with specified medical conditions	[3] [4]1·0	2·0	[5]17·4	5·0
War pensioners	0·1	—	0·9	0·3
Other exempt categories[6]	[7]—	—	20·5	6·0
Sub total	23,582·7	—	[8]241·3	[8]73·3
Total	47,254·9	—	322·5	—

[1] Claimants and adult dependants.
[2] Also includes people not entitled to benefit but who qualify on low income grounds.
[3] Separate figures for those who qualify because they have a specified medical condition are not available.
[4] Estimated.
[5] Includes both exempt categories.
[6] Exemption declared but category not shown.
[7] Information not available.
[8] Does not include contraceptive devices supplied free of charge.

The following groups will be exempt from dental inspection charges and have entitlement to free NHS sight tests:

	Number	*Per cent. of population*
Children under 16	9,606,600	20·3
People under 19 in full-time education	702,000	1·5
Family Income and Supplementary Benefit Claimants and their Partners	5,351,000	11·3
The following will also be exempt from dental inspection charges:		
Expectant mothers and women who have had a baby in the previous 12 months	[1]1,000,000	2·1
People aged 16 and 17 not in full-time education	1,494,000	3·2

[1] Estimate.

Notes:
(1) Figures are for England, 1986.
(2) Some of the above categories will overlap, eg some mothers could be entitled to free dental inspections on grounds both of status and low income.

Help will also be available in the form of full or partial remission of the dental inspection charge for people on low income. It is not possible to give an estimate of those likely to benefit in this way though the numbers are expected to be small.

In addition it is proposed to make regulations giving the registered blind and partially sighted and those entitled to complex lens supplements under the optical voucher scheme entitlement to free NHS sight tests. Some 200,000, (0·4 per cent. of the population) would benefit from this.

Birmingham Children's Hospital (Baby's Death)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the death of a baby refused admission to Birmingham Children's hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am aware of a statement made on 25 November by a consultant cardiologist at the Birmingham Children's hospital, Dr. E. Silave which included the following:

"The only case of which I am aware concerns a baby who was born during the last week with a serious heart abnormality in a hospital in the West Midlands Regional Health Authority. The baby could not be admitted to Birmingham Children's hospital because there was no space available on the intensive care unit. That baby has died. It was apparently very seriously ill and it is conjecture as to whether admission to the hospital would have influenced the outcome. Out of respect for the bereaved parents no further details can be made available."

Adult Dependant's Additions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients there were of adult dependant's additions with invalidity benefit *(a)* in April 1986 and *(b)* at the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: At 5 April 1986, the latest date for which information is available there were 366,300 invalidity pensioners whose benefit included an increase for an adult dependant.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of invalid care allowances given to (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) the total *(a)* at the end of 1986, *(b)* at 30 September and *(c)* in total so far.

Mr. Scott: The available information is given in the table.

Position at	[1]*Men*	[3]*Women*	*Total*
31 December 1986	[2]37,422	23,009	60,431
20 September 1987	43,236	88,621	131,857
20 November 1987	45,606	95,024	140,630

[1] From July 1976.
[2] Includes awards made to single women up to December 1985. Separate figures are not available.
[3] From 1 January 1986.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many married women receiving invalid care allowance have been given allowances backdated to 22 December 1984; what cash total this represents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Of the 89,000 invalid care allowance awards made to married and cohabiting women since June 1986, some 35,000 have attracted backdating to 22 December 1984. It is estimated that the total cost of backdating is £130 million.

Mortality

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men and women died during each month of 1986 in England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: Provisional information for 1986 is shown in the table.

Number of deaths by month of occurrence and sex, all causes and all ages England and Wales. Provisional. 1986[1]

Month of occurrence	*Males*	*Females*
January	28,999	30,985
February	27,923	29,199
March	28,218	30,388
April	23,607	23,697
May	22,561	22,551
June	21,575	21,640
July	21,118	21,152
August	21,573	21,409
September	21,767	21,872
October	22,169	22,093
November	22,428	22,625
December	24,860	25,231

[1] Excludes any death occurring in 1986, but registered after 31 March 1987.

Cancer (Women)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of deaths of women caused by cancer in each regional and area district health authority in England and Wales in each year from 1981 to 1986.

Mrs. Currie: Information for 1981 to 1985 is published in "Mortality Statistics: Area series DH 5 nos. 8-12", copies of which are in the Library. A table giving the figures for 1986 has been placed in the Library.

Hospital Car Services

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities that currently run a hospital car service; and if he will list the amount per mile paid to drivers by each health authority for running that service.

Mrs. Currie: The NHS ambulance services listed provided hospital car service transport for some of the non-emergency patients they carried during 1986. Health authorities are free to reimburse drivers in the hospital car service at rates comparable to those agreed by the General Whitley Council for NHS staff or at a rate determined in the light of local circumstances. Information about the amount paid per mile by individual health authorities is not held centrally.

NHS Ambulance Services
Avon
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Cumbria
Devon
Dorset
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
North Yorkshire
Nottingham
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
East Sussex
West Sussex
Warwickshire
Wiltshire
Northumbria Metropolitan
West Yorkshire Metropolitan
London Ambulance Service
Greater Manchester Metropolitan
South Yorkshire Metropolitan
Source: SBH 195 Health Service Returns.

Heart Surgery

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the number of children currently waiting for heart surgery at each of the regional centres for heart operations in the United Kingdom; what is the average waiting time; what is the longest waiting time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many intensive care beds there are at each regional centre for children's heart surgery in the United Kingdom; how many are currently usable and how many stand idle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information on the number of children waiting for heart surgery is not collected centrally. The

number of urgent cases is likely to vary from day to day. In most cases intensive care beds for babies and children are used for a range of conditions. It is not, therefore, possible to say how many are available specifically for heart surgery.

Water Charges

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail what proportion of water charges (i) existing claimants and (ii) new claimants after April will be expected to meet; and if he will detail the rebates scheme available to those on low income to assist with their water charges.

Mr. Portillo: At present, help is available for water charges under the supplementary benefit scheme either as part of the supplementary benefit payment or, under an administrative arrangement, with housing benefit. As part of the social security reforms individual amounts for water charges will no longer be included in benefit. Both existing and new claimants after April 1988 will be required to pay the full amount of their water charge bill themselves. Rebates will not be available for this cost, but in setting the levels of income support for April 1988 account was taken of the overall amount spent in supplementary benefit on water charges.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek powers to enable him to make regulations controlling the wording and interpretation of questions put to potential policy holders by health insurance companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.
I have no such plans.

Maidstone General Hospital

Mrs. Widdicombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take urgent measures to ensure the reopening of Maidstone general hospital to cases other than emergencies and malignancies;

(2) if he will make a statement about the decision of the Maidstone district health authority to close the Maidstone general hospital to all admissions except emergencies and malignancies.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* Health authorities are expected to manage within their cash limits. Maidstone health authority is a resource allocation working party gaining health district, but increased demand since 1983 following the opening of the new Maidstone hospital has outstripped all expectations.

The district has taken steps to contain expenditure this year which, among other measures, include the temporary closure of four wards and a freeze on staff vacancies.

The South-East Thames regional health authority and Maidstone health authority are discussing the situation to ascertain what further steps may be needed to ensure a satisfactory resolution of the difficulties.

Income-Related Assistance

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the total number of people in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including claimants and their dependants on the basis of the most recent data, who are currently reliant on income-related assistance, including supplementary benefits, housing benefits and family income supplement; and what would be the number if all those eligible claimed their own and their dependants' entitlements.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* Precise answers to each individual part of this question cannot be provided because multiple benefit receipt implies an unknown degree of double counting. Comparable answers cannot be provided because the available information is at different dates. The latest available details for individual benefits relating to Great Britain is as follows.

In April 1986 approximately 200,000 people, some of whom may have been unemployed, and who had a half million dependants, were receiving family income supplement. In May 1986, about 4·9 million claimants with 3·3 million dependants were receiving supplementary benefit. Some of these may have also been receiving family income supplement. In the autumn of 1986, around 3·7 million claimants received standard housing benefit. An estimate of the numbers of their dependants could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

For the years 1983 and 1984, an average estimate is available of the number of people eligible for family income supplement who did not claim. They totalled about 150,000 and they had some 450,000 dependants. Similar estimates suggest that, in 1983, about 1·3 million eligible people with 600,000 dependants did not claim supplementary benefit and that, in 1984, about 1·6 million eligible people with 1·8 million dependants may not have claimed their standard housing benefit entitlements.

Abortion

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by country of origin of the numbers and percentages of women who travelled to the United Kingdom for abortions in each of the years since the Abortion Act came into force.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The available information is shown in the tables.

Table 1
Numbers of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 in Great Britain to women usually resident outside the United Kingdom by country of usual residence, and percentage of all abortions in Great Britain, 1968 to 1980

	1968	
	Number	*per cent.*
All legal abortions Great Britain	25,195	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	64	0·25
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	48	0·19
Austria	9	0·04
Belgium and Luxembourg	19	0·08
Denmark	3	0·01
France	56	0·22
Germany	620	2·46
Italy	3	0·01
Netherlands	37	0·15
Norway and Sweden	2	0·01
Portugal	—	—
Spain	6	0·02
Switzerland	13	0·05
Other European	3	0·01

	1968 Number	1968 per cent.
Canada	106	0·42
United States of America	185	0·73
Other American	1	. .
Rest of the world	12	0·05

	1969 Number	1969 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	58,375	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	123	0·21
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	96	0·16
Austria	7	0·01
Belgium and Luxembourg	150	0·26
Denmark	38	0·07
France	471	0·81
Germany	1,560	2·67
Italy	19	0·03
Netherlands	137	0·23
Norway and Sweden	23	0·04
Portugal	1	. .
Spain	21	0·04
Switzerland	45	0·08
Other European	10	0·02
Canada	382	0·65
United States of America	1,594	2·73
Other American	—	—
Rest of the World	30	0·05

	1970 Number	1970 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	91,819	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	261	0·28
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	165	0·18
Austria	n/a	n/a
Belgium and Luxembourg	563	0·61
Denmark	n/a	n/a
France	2,267	2·47
Germany	3,621	3·94
Italy	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	816	0·89
Norway and Sweden	n/a	n/a
Portugal	n/a	n/a
Spain	n/a	n/a
Switzerland	115	0·13
Other European	n/a	n/a
Canada	299	0·33
United States of America	1,601	1·74
Other American	390	0·42
Rest of the World	n/a	n/a

	1971 Number	1971 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	133,110	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	579	0·43
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	216	0·16
Austria	n/a	n/a
Belgium and Luxembourg	2,111	1·59
Denmark	226	0·17
France	11,986	9·00
Germany	13,560	10·19
Italy	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	792	0·59
Norway and Sweden	n/a	n/a
Portugal	n/a	n/a
Spain	n/a	n/a
Switzerland	389	0·29
Other European	2	. .

	1971 Number	1971 per cent.
Canada	67	0·05
United States of America	187	0·14
Other American	—	—
Rest of the World	924	0·69

	1972 Number	1972 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	167,493	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	975	0·58
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	295	0·18
Austria	257	0·15
Belgium and Luxembourg	2,536	1·51
Denmark	86	0·05
France	25,189	15·04
Germany	17,532	10·47
Italy	480	0·29
Netherlands	243	0·15
Norway and Sweden	93	0·06
Portugal	18	0·01
Spain	730	0·44
Switzerland	675	0·40
Other European	75	0·04
Canada	52	0·03
United States of America	131	0·08
Other American	24	0·01
Rest of the World	321	0·19

	1973 Number	1973 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	174,691	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	1,195	0·68
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	306	0·18
Austria	291	0·17
Belgium and Luxembourg	1,463	0·84
Denmark	27	0·02
France	35,293	20·20
Germany	11,326	6·48
Italy	1,172	0·67
Netherlands	101	0·06
Norway and Sweden	78	0·04
Portugal	27	0·02
Spain	1,763	1·01
Switzerland	719	0·41
Other European	155	0·09
Canada	34	0·02
United States of America	104	0·06
Other American	27	0·02
Rest of the World	429	0·25

	1974 Number	1974 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	170,508	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	1,421	0·83
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	371	0·22
Austria	268	0·16
Belgium and Luxembourg	641	0·38
Denmark	4	. .
France	36,443	21·37
Germany	5,991	3·51
Italy	1,751	1·03
Netherlands	78	0·05
Norway and Sweden	49	0·03
Portugal	59	0·03
Spain	2,978	1·75
Switzerland	618	0·36
Other European	180	0·11

	1974 Number	1974 per cent.
Canada	24	0·01
United States of America	63	0·04
Other American	30	0·02
Rest of the World	409	0·24

	1975 Number	1975 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	147,029	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	1,575	1·07
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	373	0·25
Austria	87	0·06
Belgium and Luxembourg	403	0·27
Denmark	3	..
France	14,056	9·56
Germany	3,404	2·32
Italy	5,647	3·84
Netherlands	83	0·06
Norway and Sweden	33	0·02
Portugal	60	0·04
Spain	4,393	2·99
Switzerland	413	0·28
Other European	184	0·13
Canada	13	0·01
United States of America	55	0·04
Other American	32	0·02
Rest of the world	499	0·34

	1976 Number	1976 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	136,892	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	1,822	1·33
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	336	0·25
Austria	91	0·07
Belgium and Luxembourg	390	0·28
Denmark	2	..
France	4,568	3·34
Germany	2,385	1·74
Italy	8,211	6·00
Netherlands	97	0·07
Norway and Sweden	42	0·03
Portugal	38	0·03
Spain	6,397	4·67
Switzerland	308	0·22
Other European	268	0·20
Canada	20	0·01
United States of America	57	0·04
Other American	29	0·02
Rest of the world	611	0·45

	1977 Number	1977 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	140,338	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	2,185	1·56
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	389	0·28
Austria	115	0·08
Belgium and Luxembourg	349	0·25
Denmark	5	—
France	4,143	2·95
Germany	1,705	1·21
Italy	7,549	5·38
Netherlands	88	0·06
Norway and Sweden	37	0·03
Portugal	29	0·02
Spain	10,187	7·26
Switzerland	274	0·20
Other European	388	0·28

	1977 Number	1977 per cent.
Canada	11	0·01
United States of America	58	0·04
Other American	25	0·02
Rest of the world	709	0·51

	1978 Number	1978 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	149,009	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	2,550	1·71
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	413	0·28
Austria	104	0·07
Belgium and Luxembourg	338	0·23
Denmark	3	—
France	3,187	2·14
Germany	1,171	0·79
Italy	3,912	2·63
Netherlands	79	0·05
Norway and Sweden	16	0·01
Portugal	28	0·02
Spain	14,015	9·41
Switzerland	292	0·20
Other European	436	0·29
Canada	17	0·01
United States of America	70	0·05
Other American	45	0·03
Rest of the world	749	0·50

	1979 Number	1979 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	157,530	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	2,809	1·78
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	457	0·29
Austria	64	0·04
Belgium and Luxembourg	231	0·15
Denmark	2	..
France	3,047	1·93
Germany	722	0·46
Italy	959	0·61
Netherlands	38	0·02
Norway and Sweden	11	0·01
Portugal	36	0·02
Spain	17,062	10·83
Switzerland	234	0·15
Other European	90	0·06
Canada	8	0·01
United States of America	64	0·04
Other American	35	0·02
Rest of the world	820	0·52

	1980 Number	1980 per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	168,808	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,324	1·97
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	484	0·29
Austria	58	0·03
Belgium and Luxembourg	198	0·12
Denmark	5	..
France	4,117	2·44
Germany	584	0·35
Italy	774	0·46
Netherlands	41	0·02
Norway and Sweden	8	..
Portugal	41	0·02
Spain	18,342	10·87
Switzerland	179	0·11
Other European	79	0·05

	1980 Number	per cent.
Canada	6	..
United States of America	69	0·04
Other American	33	0·02
Rest of the world	898	0·53

n/a Not available.
.. Less than 0·0 per cent.

Numbers of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 in Great Britain to women usually resident outside the United Kingdom by country of usual residence, and percentage of all abortions in Great Britain, 1981-86

	1981 Number	Per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	171,487	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,605	2·10
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	455	0·27
Austria	58	0·03
Belgium and Luxembourg	153	0·09
Denmark	1	1
France	4,100	2·39
Germany	514	0·30
Gibraltar	31	0·02
Greece	11	0·01
Italy	642	0·37
Malta	41	0·02
Netherlands	41	0·02
Norway and Sweden	11	0·01
Portugal	36	0·02
Spain	20,454	11·93
Switzerland	153	0·09
Turkey	1	1
Other European	15	0·01
Canada	11	0·01
United States of America	91	0·05
Algeria	114	0·07
Argentina	8	..
Australia	31	0·02
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	7	..
Brazil	1	1
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1	1
Egypt	7	..
Ghana	1	1
Hong Kong	6	..
India	6	..
Iran	1	1
Israel	1	1
Japan	1	1
Kenya	1	1
Libya, Tunisia	9	0·01
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	1	1
Morocco	1	1
New Zealand	1	1
Nigeria	13	0·01
Republic of South Africa	512	0·30
Sudan	1	1
Zambia	10	0·01
Zimbabwe	75	0·04
Rest of the World	242	0·14

	1982 Number	per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	171,470	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,654	2·13
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	467	0·27
Austria	49	0·03
Belgium and Luxembourg	122	0·07
Denmark	1	1
France	3,825	2·23
Germany	365	0·21
Gibraltar	26	0·02
Greece	7	0·00
Italy	626	0·37
Malta	36	0·02
Netherlands	46	0·03
Norway and Sweden	13	0·01
Portugal	50	0·03
Spain	21,415	12·49
Switzerland	106	0·06
Turkey	1	1
Other European	13	0·01
Canada	13	0·01
United States of America	103	0·06
Algeria	98	0·06
Argentina	1	1
Australia	40	0·02
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	11	0·01
Brazil	7	..
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1	1
Egypt	1	1
Ghana	1	1
Hong Kong	6	..
India	1	1
Iran	–	–
Israel	1	1
Japan	1	1
Kenya	1	1
Libya, Tunisia	13	0·01
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	1	1
Morocco	1	1
New Zealand	1	1
Nigeria	16	0·01
Rupublic of South Africa	563	0·33
Sudan	1	1
Zambia	1	1
Zimbabwe	117	0·07
Rest of the world	278	0·16

	1983 Number	per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	170,620	
Country of Usual Residence		
Irish Republic	3,677	2·16
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	462	0·27
Austria	82	0·05
Belgium and Luxembourg	75	0·04
Denmark	1	1
France	3,796	2·22
Germany	298	0·17
Gibraltar	22	0·01
Greece	10	0·01
Italy	617	0·36
Malta	47	0·03
Netherlands	26	0·02
Norway and Sweden	11	0·01
Portugal	36	0·02
Spain	22,002	12·90
Switzerland	110	0·06
Turkey	1	1
Other European	11	0·01
Canada	17	0·01
USA	101	0·06
Algeria	111	0·07
Argentina	1	1
Australia	21	0·01
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	1	1
Brazil	1	1
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1	1

	1983	
	Number	per cent.
Egypt	1—	1—
Ghana	1—	1—
Hong Kong	1—	1—
India	6	..
Iran	1—	1—
Israel	1—	1—
Japan	6	..
Kenya	1—	1—
Libya, Tunisia	9	0·01
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	1—	1—
Morocco	1—	1—
New Zealand	6	..
Nigeria	10	0·01
Republic of South Africa	560	0·33
Sudan	6	..
Zambia	7	..
Zimbabwe	77	0·05
Rest of the World	293	0·17

	1984	
	Number	per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	179,148	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,948	2·20
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	454	0·25
Austria	107	0·06
Belgium and Luxembourg	52	0·03
Denmark	8	..
France	3,931	2·19
Germany	258	0·14
Gibraltar	35	0·02
Greece	7	0·00
Italy	715	0·40
Malta	48	0·03
Netherlands	38	0·02
Norway and Sweden	10	0·01
Portugal	35	0·02
Spain	20,060	11·20
Switzerland	102	0·06
Turkey	1—	1—
Other European	19	0·01
Canada	19	0·01
United States of America	118	0·07
Algeria	121	0·07
Argentina	1—	1—
Australia	50	0·03
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	1—	1—
Brazil	1—	1—
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1—	1—
Egypt	7	..
Ghana	1—	1—
Hong Kong	1—	1—
India	1—	1—
Iran	1—	1—
Israel	1—	1—
Japan	1—	1—
Kenya	1—	1—
Libya, Tunisia	6	..
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	1—	1—
Morocco	6	..
New Zealand	12	0·01
Nigeria	1—	1—
Republic of South Africa	755	0·42
Sudan	1—	1—
Zambia	6	..
Zimbabwe	61	0·03
Rest of the World	308	0·17

	1985	
	Number	per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	181,062	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,888	2·15
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	515	0·28
Austria	74	0·04
Belgium and Luxembourg	50	0·03
Denmark	1—	1—
France	3,782	2·09
Germany	181	0·10
Gibraltar	28	0·02
Greece	8	0·00
Italy	630	0·35
Malta	53	0·03
Netherlands	34	0·02
Norway and Sweden	17	0·01
Portugal	34	0·02
Spain	17,688	9·77
Switzerland	92	0·05
Turkey	1—	1—
Other European	12	0·01
Canada	12	0·01
USA	112	0·06
Algeria	124	0·07
Argentina	1—	1—
Australia	35	0·02
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	1—	1—
Brazil	1—	1—
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	9	..
Egypt	1—	1—
Ghana	1—	1—
Hong Kong	1—	1—
India	1—	1—
Iran	1—	1—
Israel	8	..
Japan	1—	1—
Kenya	6	..
Libya, Tunisia	1—	1—
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	1—	1—
Morocco	1—	1—
New Zealand	6	..
Nigeria	1—	1—
Republic of South Africa	609	0·34
Sudan	7	..
Zambia	1—	1—
Zimbabwe	64	0·04
Rest of the World	329	0·18

	1986	
	Number	per cent.
All legal abortions Great Britain	181,835	
Country of usual residence		
Irish Republic	3,920	2·16
Channel Islands and Isle of Man	566	0·31
Austria	59	0·03
Belgium and Luxembourg	47	0·03
Denmark	1	1
France	3,369	1·85
Germany	141	0·08
Gibraltar	28	0·02
Greece	8	0·00
Italy	664	0·37
Malta	52	0·03
Netherlands	32	0·02
Norway and Sweden	11	0·01
Portugal	49	0·03
Spain	11,935	6·56
Switzerland	64	0·04
Turkey	9	0·00
Other European	15	0·01
Canada	12	0·01
United States of America	87	0·05
Algeria	116	0·06

	1986	
	Number	*per cent.*
Argentina	1	1
Australia	32	0·02
Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland	7	. .
Brazil	6	. .
Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Philippines	1	1
Egypt	1	1
Ghana	8	. .
Hong Kong	6	. .
India	1	1
Iran	7	. .
Israel	1	1
Japan	10	0·01
Kenya	1	1
Libya, Tunisia	1	1
Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei	8	. .
Morocco	8	. .
New Zealand	7	. .
Nigeria	17	0·01
Republic of South Africa	517	0·28
Sudan	1	1
Zambia	6	. .
Zimbabwe	69	0·04
Rest of the world	309	0·17

n/a Not available.
. . Less than 0·01 per cent.
[1] Less than six abortions.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people above the level of income support and paying average rent and rates will be entitled to housing benefit in April 1988, broken down into pensioners, two-parent families and one-parent families.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* It is estimated that the number of people with incomes above the level of income support who will be receiving housing benefit in April 1988 will be as follows:

	Thousands
Pensioners	1,950
Two parent families	150
One parent families	100
Others	400
Total	2,600

Note:
These figures include households paying all levels of rent and rates since it would not be possible to isolate those paying exactly the average level.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest figures for the numbers of people claiming housing benefit; and if he will give an estimate of the numbers that will be entitled to claim after April 1988, broken down into pensioners, two-parent families and one-parent families.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* The information requested is as follows:

1. The latest estimate is that in the autumn of 1986, some 7·2 million households were in receipt of housing benefit.

2. It is estimated that the numbers of people receiving housing benefit after April 1988 will be:

	Thousands
Pensioners	3,550
Two-parent families	650
One-parent families	600
Others	1,300
Total	6,100

Note:
The two total figures are derived from different sources, and it would therefore be misleading to make a direct comparison between them.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is still his policy to conclude a voluntary agreement with US Tobacco regarding the printing of a health warning on packets of Skoal Bandits; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* Measures further to control Skoal Bandits, including a health warning on the label and advertising material, have been under review since last year. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Electricity Prices

36. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of state for Social Services what he estimates will be the cost to the National Health Service of the proposed increase in electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates will be the cost to the National Health Service of the proposed increase in electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

64. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates will be the cost to the National Health Service of the proposed increase in electricity charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has announced plans which will result in increases in electricity prices over a two-year period beginning in April 1988. On the basis of past patterns of supply we estimate that the cost to all health authorities in the financial year 1988-89 will be in the order of £8 million.

Health authorities are major users of electricity. together with the National Health Service Procurement Directorate, and in negotiation with electricity boards and the Electricity Council, they will continue to ensure their considerable investment represents good value for money.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 December 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Zircon

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has yet taken a decision whether or not to prosecute anyone in relation to project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Having considered with the Director of Public Prosecutions all the relevant factors, including in particular the public interest, I have decided not to institute criminal proceedings in respect of any disclosure that has been reported to him of information in relation to Project Zircon. I have consulted my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate: he does not intend to institute any separate proceedings in Scotland.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the provision of additional assistance for black South Africans in South Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: In accordance with the agreements reached at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, the Government propose to finance from the aid programme 20 new training places in Britain for black South Africans at a cost of an additional £200,000 a year. We shall also increase by £80,000 a year the £270,000 currently available under the heads of mission gifts scheme and the small projects scheme. This will bring our commitment for training and assistance for black South Africans to more than £21 million over five years. Additional assistance is under consideration through non-governmental channels.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to extend the scope of operations of the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have agreed to a request from the corporation to include Mozambique in its area of operations. No further extension is at present under consideration.

St. Helena

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a decision has been reached on the award of the contract to build a replacement ship for St. Helena.

Mr. Chris Patten: Subject to contract negotiation, this order will be placed with Hall Russell Ltd. of Aberdeen.

TRANSPORT

Speed Limiters

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce measures requiring the installation of maximum speed limiters for *(a)* coaches already in use, *(b)* new coaches and *(c)* heavy lorries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: New regulations to fit speed limiters to coaches will be made shortly. They will require new coaches to be fitted with a speed limiter from 1 April 1989, coaches first used on or after 1 April 1984 to be fitted from 1 April 1990, and older coaches from 1 April 1991.

There are no plans at present to require the fitting of speed limiters to heavy lorries, for which maximum speed limits of 60 mph (motorways) 50 mph (dual carriageways) and 40 mph (single carriageways) already apply. We are examining ways of ensuring greater compliance with these limits.

Some lorry operators fit limiters on a voluntary basis.

Primary Route Network (North-West)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to review the longer-term road needs of the north-west region with particular regard to the primary route network.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We constantly monitor conditions on the existing trunk road and motorway network. In addition I agreed at the recent regional annual consultative committee meeting held in Kendal that the Department would co-operate with the working party which local authorities are to set up to examine road investment needs in the north-west.

Preston Bypass

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to improve the capacity of the Preston bypass section of the M6.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Consultants have been appointed to design schemes to widen and improve the M6 between junctions 30 and 32 (Broughton).

Motorway Network, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to accept Lancashire county council's proposal for a comprehensive signalling system to be installed on the motorway network in Lancashire, including the use of close circuit television.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We propose to appoint consulting engineers to examine the need for improvements to communications on motorways in Lancashire. The consultants already appointed to design the improvements between junctions 30 and 32 of M6 will advise on the provision of a gantry signalling system and the use of permanent CCTV on this section.

A19 (Crash Barriers)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in respect of erecting crash barriers on the central reservation on the A19 from Dishforth to the Tyne tunnel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Good progress has been made in providing safety fencing to the A19 central reservations between Dishforth and the Tyne tunnel. 15.1 km have been completed.

Thirty five km are under construction and works to the remaining 40 km are scheduled to commence in the financial year 1988-89.

A19-A1 Network

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the road network from the A19 to the A1 within the areas of Cleveland, County Durham and Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no proposals at present for major improvements to the road network from the A19 to A1 within Cleveland, Durham and Tyne and Wear.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Most types of paper we use contain varying proportions of recycled paper. Comprehensive information on waste paper is not readily available. The waste paper from our London buildings is sent for recycling.

Railways (Investment)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how much money has been allocated by British Rail for the purchase of the 100 new class 60 locomotives; and how much of this money will be generated entirely by British Rail's own operations.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railway Board has allocated about £130 million for the purchase of 100 new class 60 locomotives. The precise cost will depend on the board's evaluation of the tenders it has received from manufacturers. The cost of the investment will be borne entirely by the board's freight sector which receives no Government grant.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the level of state subsidy for national railways in France, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. David Mitchell: So far as France and West Germany are concerned, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 23 October 1987 at column 913. Japanese National Railways was split into regional companies with restructured finances on 1 April this year. This makes it impracticable to make any direct comparisons.

Trolley Buses

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has made any study of the relative environmental effects in terms of noise and fuel exhaust pollution of electrically powered trolley buses compared with conventional diesel-engined buses travelling on hilly routes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: There has been no specific study carried out by the Department on this point. We have supported the former West Yorkshire county council in representing the United Kingdom in the European study COST 303 of the economic potential for electrically powered trolley buses, in particular those with auxiliary diesel engines which I understand West Yorkshire favours.

Environmental effects as well as economic comparatives were taken into account in that study the results of which have been published. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether cars presented for vehicle emissions type approval may use unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Now that unleaded petrol is becoming increasingly available, manufacturers may choose to use it in vehicles emissions type approval tests.

WALES

Initial Teacher Training

82. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reorganise initial teacher training in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

83. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has any plans to reorganise initial teacher training in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no plans for reorganising provision in the public sector in Wales following my right hon. Friend's announcement on 30 September of entries up to 1989 to all six colleges with initial teacher training courses. Decisions about initial teacher training in the university sector are for the University Grants Committee.

Housing

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many families are currently on the housing waiting list for each local authority in Wales; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of people on housing waiting lists is not available centrally.

Estimates of the percentage of households which contain applicants were published in table 2.20 in the 1986 Welsh intercensal survey report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Comparable figures for 1979 are not available.

Job Creation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what system of monitoring he employs to measure the number of jobs created by firms in receipt of regional selective assistance against the number of jobs projected by them at the time of application.

Mr. Peter Walker: Grants are paid in instalments related to the achievement of the projects' forecast objectives. Each claim for payment is required to include a report on all aspects of project progress, including job creation, certified by an independent accountant. In addition, projects are inspected by officals of my Department at appropriate intervals to verify the details.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics have been collected on the proportion of jobs projected at the time of regional aid approval which actually resulted from *(a)* projects generally and *(b)* inward investment projects from overseas.

Mr. Peter Walker: Statistics collected on projects receiving regional aid include employment achievement against forecasts. For completed projects since 1979, the proportion of jobs achieved against forecast is *(a)* 87 per cent. for projects generally and *(b)* 85 per cent. for inward investment projects from overseas.

Business Closures (Redundancy)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many redundancies the Manpower Services Commission's records show to have taken place as a result of business closures in Wales since June 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The information is not available in the form requested. I am, however, delighted to say that it is certain that redundancies are at a much lower level this year than they have been in recent years including the years 1977-78 and 1978-79.

Part-time Employees

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes have taken place in numbers employed part-time in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Data from which an annual series can be derived are calculated only in respect of women who make up the bulk of part-timers; the estimates are as follows:

Year: June	*Females (Thousands)*
1979	165
1980	163
1981	159
1982	157
1983	164
1984	164
1985	171
1986	174
1987	182

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bookmakers

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has yet received any recommendation from the Director General of Fair Trading regarding the possible reference of the bookmaking industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No. I understand that the Director General of Fair Trading is still considering whether he should make a complex monopoly reference of the supply of off-course bookmaking services to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Cigarette Imports

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the extent and trend of low-priced imports of cigarettes; from which countries they come; by what amount, in pence per 20, such cigarettes are cheaper than United Kingdom-produced cigarettes; and what representations he has received about the implications of these imports for the competitiveness and viability of the United Kingdom cigarette industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: According to estimates provided by the United Kingdom tobacco industry, imports of cheap brands of cigarettes increased from 0·1 billion pieces in 1983 to 9·6 billion in 1986, but appear to be falling back this year to rather less than 10 per cent. of United Kingdom cigarette consumption. About 80 per cent. of these imports come from the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin. The industry estimates that these imports can undercut the United Kingdom retail price of United Kingdom manufactured brands by up to 25p per packet of 20 cigarettes.

I personally have not received any representations on this issue, but I understand that colleagues in this and other Departments have, and that meetings with industry representatives have been arranged.

Shipbuilding Industry (Redundancies)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding industry in Tyne and Wear during the period from 1 January to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Atkins: It is estimated that there was a reduction in employment of some 16,000 in the shipbuilding industry in Tyne and Wear during the period January 1979 to December 1986.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding industry throughout the United Kingdom during the period from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Atkins: It is estimated that there was a reduction in employment of some 48,000 in the shipbuilding industry in the United Kingdom during the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

Film Industry

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action is being taken to implement the undertaking which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry gave the House on 20 November, *Official Report*, columns 1389-92, to consult the cinema and film industries about follow-up action to the 1983 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of films and the subsequent experimental films release scheme.

Mr. Maude: I am today beginning such consultation. As my hon. Friend said in the House on 20 November, we have given further consideration to the adverse public interest findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the supply of films, in conjunction with the results of the experimental film release in the

Manchester and Glasgow areas conducted by the Office of Fair Trading. Following that experiment, I am considering making an order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to implement the two main recommendations of the MMC concerning barring and popular films.

I am therefore today writing to interested parties in the cinema and film industries to indicate the terms in which an order under the Fair Trading Act might be framed and to seek their views on this course of action. I am proposing firstly that existing and future long-term arrangements between a distributor and a cinema operator to bar other cinemas locally from showing the same films concurrently might be made unlawful. Secondly, I am proposing that a four-week limit might be placed on the length of time for which "first run" cinemas may exhibit a popular film without making it available to competitors.

Copies of the Director General of Fair Trading's report on the experimental films release scheme together with copies of our consultation letter have been placed in the Library of the House and are available in the Vote Office.

I am asking that comments on these proposals should be submitted in writing by 31 January 1988.

Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about the Consumer Arbitration Agreements Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have asked the Department's Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law, chaired by Lord Justice Mustill, to examine the issues raised by the Bill as a matter of urgency. The Committee will consider representations by interested parties. Those interested in submitting evidence should contact the secretary of the committee as soon as possible.

EC (Liquid Containers)

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the programme which Her Majesty's Government were due to submit during the course of the current week in response to the European Commission's liquid containers directive (directive on containers of liquids for human consumption — 85/339/EEC).

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* General publication of the programme would not be appropriate until it has been approved by the Commission as required by directive 85/339/EEC.

Meanwhile, copies of the programme in the form submitted to the European Commission will be sent to all interested organisations in the United Kingdom which are known to my Department. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. They will also be available, from the Department (212 8728) on request, to anyone who wants them.

Shipbuilding Industry (Merseyside)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding industry in Merseyside during the period from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* It is estimated that there was a reduction in employment of some 3,700 in the shipbuilding industry in Merseyside during the period 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

British Telecom

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to *(a)* the number of shareholders to be given bonus shares in British Telecom, under the loyalty bonus scheme, on 30 November 1988, and *(b)* the number of shares to be given out under the scheme.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The qualifying date for eligibility for bonus shares in British Telecom is 30 November 1987. Current estimates are that almost 1 million shareholders will qualify for some 55 million bonus shares in total. These will be transferred as soon as practicable after the qualifying date.

Regional Policy

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to reform regional policy in such a way as to discourage future company relocations from areas of high unemployment to areas of relatively low unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Relocation by a particular company is a matter for its commercial judgment.

Batchelor plc

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from Sheffield city council regarding the decision by Unilever to relocate Batchelor plc headquarters from Sheffield to Croydon; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* I have received no representations from Sheffield city council about the decision by Unilever to relocate the Batchelors Food headquarters from Sheffield. This is in any case a matter for the company's own commercial judgment.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Daya Bay Power Plant

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, what remedial action will be taken to ensure the safety of the Daya Bay power plant; who has been identified as responsible for the omission of the reinforcement bars from the first concrete layer; what representations he has received from the Government of China on the implications of these faults for the safety of local residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Additional bars and concrete reinforcement have been placed in the second layer of the reactor raft in order to ensure that the safety requirements of the original design are met.

The omission of bars was due to an incorrect interpretation of technical drawings by the contractor and

the inadequate enforcement of quality control checks. Improvements have since been made to the quality control arrangements to avoid similar problems in the future.

We have not received any representations from the Government of China on the implications of these faults for the safety of local residents.

Hong Kong (Vietnamese Refugees)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees are currently in Hong Kong; what plans he has for their resettlement *(a)* up to 1997 and *(b)* after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On 27 November there were 9,359 Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. In May we decided to accept into the United Kingdom a further 468 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong over the next two years. We are pursuing our diplomatic campaign to urge other resettlement countries to take more refugees from Hong Kong. We aim to have fully resolved this problem well before 1997.

Hong Kong Futures Exchange

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 23 November, whether all the 32 firms that are being sued by the Hong Kong Futures Corporation have been suspended from trading on the Hong Kong Futures Exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 23 November, how many firms have been suspended from trading from each of the Hong Kong stock exchange and the Hong Kong futures exchange; and for how long.

Mr. Eggar: Twelve firms have been suspended from the Hong Kong stock exchange and 35 from the Hong Kong futures exchange. The suspensions remain in effect until further notice.

Namibia

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each year since 1979, the initiatives and consultations he has had with other Economic Community and United Nations members on the implementation of independence for Namibia.

Mr. Mellor: Detailed information is not readily available, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, I can assure the hon. Member that during the period in question we have had regular discussions with our EC partners and other UN member states with the aim of securing implementation of the UN plan for Namibian independence.

Nicaragua

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his Nicaraguan colleague, Father Miguel D'Escoto-Brockman.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met Father Miguel D'Escoto-Brockman at the meeting of the EC, Central American and Contadora Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg in November 1985.

Disarmament

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if a copy of the intermediate range nuclear forces treaty will be made available to hon. and right hon. Members; and if he will make a statement about the implications for the United Kingdom of the version finally agreed.

Mr. Mellor: A copy of the United States/Soviet treaty, once signed, will be made available to the House. Copies of the United Kingdom agreements with the United States and Soviet Union on the arrangements for inspections in the United Kingdom will also be made available once these agreements are signed.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of the fact that, under the proposed intermediate nuclear forces treaty, he will permit foreign observers to inspect military facilities on United Kingdom soil, Her Majesty's Government will *(a)* be a signatory to any part of the treaty and *(b)* enjoy reciprocal rights to take part in the teams inspecting facilities in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The intermediate nuclear forces treaty is a bilateral one between the United States and Soviet Union. We will not be a signatory to any part of the treaty. But we will conclude a separate agreement with the United States concerning the inspection arrangements in this country and a further separate agreement in the form of an exchange of notes with the Soviet Union to safeguard our sovereignty and security. Compliance with the treaty will be entirely a matter for the United States and the Soviet Union; the inspection teams will comprise United States and Soviet personnel.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Mellor: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, 12 meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for December.

The Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers, which meets on 1 December, will discuss action to combat long-term unemployment; a progress report on the action programmes for the preparation of young people for adult and working life and for the integration of people with disabilities; and article 118A of the treaty of Rome concerning health and safety at work. The Council will consider a common position under the co-operation procedure on the draft directives on benzene and on the proscription of four specified carcinogens. A progress report on the draft directive on exposure limits and a communication on a women's research institute may also be considered.

The Environment Council will meet on 3 December and will discuss emissions from large combustion plants; three

draft directives on vehicle emissions; dumping of waste at sea in the light of the recent North sea conference; two separate proposals for the control of the discharge into water of HCB and HCBD (two uncommon but very hazardous list I substances) and chromium. A proposal to establish a notification procedure for the export of dangerous chemicals; a proposal to establish a programme illustrating the link between environmental projects and employment creation; controls on cadmium usage and a proposal to extend the marine pollution information system to inland waterways.

The European Council, which will be held in Copenhagen on 4/5 December, is expected to concentrate on the financial situation of the Community, in particular the reform of the common agricultural policy.

The Economic and Financial Council is expected to meet on 7 December to discuss the Commission's annual report on the economic situation in the Community.

The Transport Council will meet on 7 December. Ministers are expected to continue discussions on the air transport liberalisation package covering fares, capacity, market access and the application of competition rules. Transport infrastructure, summertime, liberalisation of road transport and road haulage issues will be discussed as time permits.

The Industry Council meets on 8 December and will discuss Commission proposals on the future of the EC steel regime.

The Budget Council is expected to meet on 9/10 December to continue discussions on the establishment of a draft budget for 1988.

The Agriculture Council meets on 10/11 December to follow up the recent discussions on agricultural stabilisers. The Council may also discuss beef tariff quotas, quick frozen foods and maximum pesticide residues in cereals, fruit and vegetables.

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 14/15 December. The agenda will include the proposed Commission amendments concerning the extension of the regulation governing the Community's food aid programme, the 1988 guidelines for the Community's programme of aid to Asia and Latin America, and the content of a Community submission on services in the Uruguay round. Arrangements for a special Community programme to assist poor, heavily indebted African countries that are taking action to adjust the structure of their economies are expected to be finalised. The Council will again consider a regulation laying down the maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs after a nuclear accident, together with a proposal to extend the arrangements governing food imports following the Chernobyl accident. A Co-operation Council under the terms of the EC/Yugoslavia co-operation agreement will also be held during the meeting.

The Fisheries Council is expected to meet on 14-15 December and is likely to discuss total allowable catches and quotas, and relations with third countries. The Council may also discuss amendments to marketing regulations.

The Consumer Council will meet on 18 December to discuss toy safety, unit pricing, integration of consumer protection into other Community policies and consumer participation in setting of standards.

The Research Council will meet on 21 December. The provisional agenda anticipates discussion on the proposals for the next multi-annual programme of the Community's joint research centre (1988-1991). The Council is expected to adopt two programmes, on the RACE (R and D in Advanced Communications Technologies in Europe) (1987-1991) programme and the research and development programme in the field of science and technology for development (1987-1990). It is also expected that the Council will approve common positions on the ESPRIT II programme proposal and the proposed extension to the BRITE programme (industrial technologies).

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any communication from the United States Government, indicating whether the production of United States binary chemical weapons is due to commence;

(2) if he has received any communication from the French Government, indicating whether French binary chemical weapons will be stored outside France;

(3) if he has had any communication from the French Government, indicating whether the production of French binary chemical weapons has begun.

Mr. Eggar: Pursuant to my answer of 24 November, at column *101*, following is the corrected version.

We have received no communication from the French Government about the production or storage of French binary chemical weapons.

We understand that the production of United States binary chemical weapons can begin on 17 December.

EMPLOYMENT

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible in Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Lee: During 1985-86, the Central Office of Information reappointed Davidson Pearce Ltd. as my Department's sole advertising agency. In the course of that year Davidson Pearce conducted the following campaigns for my Department:

Campaign	*Total Cost* £
Part-time Job Release Scheme	28,150
Career Development Loans	21,250
Action for Jobs	29,750

In addition the Central Office of Information retained the following agencies on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission's campaigns for which I have responsibility in Parliament.

Agency	*Campaign*	*Total Cost* £
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Job Centres	23,200
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Employment Mobility Scheme	5,260
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Training Courses	157,980
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Sepacs	2,150
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Fit for Work Award Scheme	28,380
White Bull Holmes Ltd.	Enterprise Allowance Scheme	319,650
Saatchi & Saatchi Compton Ltd.	Youth Training Scheme	4,233,400
Gold Greenlees Trott Advertising Ltd.	Community Programme	209,300

Loans Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many loans have been made under the loans guarantee scheme; what number of firms in receipt of such loans have failed; and what is the estimated cost of each job created by recipient companies under the schemes.

Mr. Cope: From May 1981 to 31 October 1987, 18,633 guarantees have been issued under the scheme; 6,164 guaranteed loans have ended in default by borrowers. The net Exchequer cost per person leaving the unemployment count as a result of the scheme is estimated at approximately £400. This estimate uses information derived from a review carried out by Robson Rhodes in 1983-84. A further review of the effects of the scheme is currently being undertaken by National Economic Research Associates Ltd. and is expected to be completed in June 1988. The cost figures may be revised in the light of the review.

"Trade Unions and Their Members"

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" were in favour of the proposal that the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984 should be extended to the election of all general secretaries, presidents, and members of union principal executive committees.

Mr. Nicholls: 24 of the 67 comments received on the Green Paper proposal were in favour of extending the statutory election requirements to cover all members of trade union principal executive committees, general secretaries and presidents.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" were in favour of the proposal that there should be a statutory provision made for members of a union to be entitled to inspect the current accounting records of that union and to be accompanied by a professional adviser.

Mr. Nicholls: Of 48 comments on the proposal to give trade union members and their professional advisers a statutory right of access to their union's accounts, 32 were in favour.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" were in favour of the proposal that there should be a right for all union members not to be expelled or otherwise disciplined for refusing or failing to take industrial action.

Mr. Nicholls: 16 of the 67 comments received on the Green Paper proposal were in favour of giving trade union members protection against disciplinary action for refusing or failing to strike or take other industrial action.

Restart

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of restart interviews which have taken place in England, Scotland and Wales in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: The number of people interviewed under the restart programme in each month since the programme began is shown in the table.

	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*
1986			
June	37,807	9,102	4,446
July	91,817	12,034	6,536
August	69,924	11,374	5,031
September	84,537	11,714	5,722
October	133,105	17,162	8,925
November	130,507	16,482	8,273
December	94,283	8,354	4,197
1987			
January	159,812	24,663	13,690
February	152,198	21,381	10,952
March	103,781	15,298	7,508
April	70,798	10,325	5,343
May	112,304	21,461	8,617
June	147,053	22,129	11,402
July	197,244	28,189	15,107
August	158,478	23,239	10,135
September	148,926	23,151	10,085
October	207,487	30,435	13,426

Redundancy

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend employment protection legislation so as to remove the requirement on an employer to hold full consultation procedures with employees where 10 or more employees request redundancy rather than temporary lay-off; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have no plans to amend the legislation on redundancy consultation. The present provisions which are contained in section 99 of the Employment Protection Act 1975 implement EC directive 75/129 on collective redundancies.

Industrial Language Training Service

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the review of the industrial language training service will be completed; when he will begin

consulting other interested bodies, including local authorities, over the future of the industrial language training service; and when he expects to announce a decision on the future funding of the industrial language training service.

Mr. Cope: In the light of the issues raised in the review of the industrial language training service and subsequent consultations, I am considering its management and funding after the current financial year. I have agreed to the request of the local authority associations that I meet them shortly to hear their views before reaching a decision. We consider all representations from interested bodies about the work of the Department or of the Manpower Services Commission.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been issued to local unemployment benefit offices following the decision of the social security commissioner that ex gratia payments made by British Shipbuilders did not disqualify recipients from receiving unemployment benefit, commissioner's file number CU/364/1985.

Mr. Cope: Instructions have been issued for the offices concerned to alert staff to the consequences of the decision; to explain the action being taken centrally to establish the extent to which the decision affected other redundancies within the British Shipbuilders Group; to arrange for the issue of questionnaires to claimants who may have been affected by the decision; to give advice on how to deal with completed questionnaires and establish whether payment under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1975 was due; and to advise on the conditions to be applied and procedure to be followed in considering special payments to certain claimants affected by the decision who do not qualify for benefit under the Social Security Act 1975.

Asbestos

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of imprisonments, *(b)* the number of prosecutions and average fines and *(c)* the number of improvement and prohibition notices issued under the various asbestos regulations for each year from 1983 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: *(a)* One person was given a suspended prison sentence in 1987. To date no persons have actually been imprisoned as a result of contravening asbestos regulations.

(b) Prosecutions taken by HM factory inspectorate and HM agricultural inspectorate 1983 to 1986-87. Figures for 1986-87 are provisional.

(i) Under Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983

Date of Hearing	*Informations Laid*	*Convictions*	*Total Fines ( )*	*Average per Conviction ( )*
1983	—	—	—	—
1984	2	2	1,000	500
1985	80	71	30,390	428
1986 (January to March)	15	7	2,050	293
1986 (April to March)	43	38	14,000	368

(ii) Under Asbestos Regulations 1969.

Date of Hearing	*Informations Laid*	*Convictions*	*Total Fines ( )*	*Average per Conviction ( )*
1983	60	55	14,150	257
1984	69	55	20,160	367
1985	30	25	12,050	482
1986 (January to March)	7	7	4,530	647
1986-87 (April to March)	19	13	5,700	438

(c) Enforcement notices issued by HMFI and HMAI 1983 to 1986-87. Figures for 1986-87 are provisional.

(i) Under Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983

Date of Issue	*Improvement*	*Deferred Prohibition*	*Immediate Prohibition*	*Total*
1983	—	—	—	—
1984	3	—	9	12
1985	3	1	28	32
1986 (January to March)	1	—	5	6
1986-87 (April to March)	—	—	7	7

(ii) Under Asbestos Regulations 1969

Date of Issue	*Improvement*	*Deferred Prohibition*	*Immediate Prohibition*	*Total*
1983	10	7	42	59
1984	10	1	60	71
1985	10	6	48	64
1986 (January to March)	6	—	21	27
1986-87 (April to March)	7	1	17	25

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the number of prosecutions

and the average fines and *(b)* the number of licences issued and the number withdrawn under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983, for each year from 1983 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: *(a)* The table shows the number of informations laid and average fines under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 to the latest available date. Figures for 1986-87 are provisional.

Year	*Informations laid*	*Average fine*
1983	—	—
1984	2	500
1985	80	428
1986 (January-March)	15	293
1986-87 (April-March)	43	368

(b) The table below shows the number of licences issued and the number withdrawn under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 to the latest available date.

Year	*Number of licences issued*	*Number of licences revoked*
1983	0	0
1983	1,313	0
1985	1,588 (including 1,017 renewals)	1
1986	936 (including 608 renewals)	2
1987	420 (including 217 renewals) (up to 30 October)	2

Health and Safety

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of appeals and results of appeals against improvement and prohibition notices for each year from 1985 to the latest available date and *(b)* the number of (i) applications to industrial tribunals and (ii) prosecutions made under the 1977 Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations for each year from 1984 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of appeals and results of appeals against improvement and prohibition notices for each year from 1985 to the latest available date is as follows:

	Appeals	*Withdrawn*	*Dismissed completely*	*Dismissed with modification*	*Upheld*
1985					
HSE plus HSC Agencies	41	31	5	2	3
Local authorities	72	55	13	4	—
Total	113	86	18	6	3
1986 (January-March)					
HSE plus HSC Agencies	14	10	3	—	1
Local authorities	17	17	—	—	—
Total	31	27	3	—	1

The above figures relate to England and Wales only and to cases actually dealt with in the period, rather than to new registrations.

The number of applications to industrial tribunals registered under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 for each year from 1984 to the latest available date is as follows:

Applications	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Failure to permit time off	6	4	4	2
Failure to pay for time off	4	2	1	1
Total	10	6	5	3

[1] January to October.

No prosecutions under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations were taken by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive in the period from 1984 to the present.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of convictions on indictment, and the average fine, for each year from 1984 to the latest available date, under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1984 and *(b)* the number of registered premises, workplace visits, accidents investigated and the number of improvement and prohibition notices issued by the Health and Safety Executive for each year from 1985 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: Information for convictions on indictment for each year from 1984 is as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Number of convictions on indictment (HSW Act)	12	11	18	8

The figure for 1987 is to 1 November, six other prosecutions are pending. Figures for average fines are not available immediately. I shall write to the hon. Member when the information is available.

The table gives information on workplace visits, accident investigations and improvement and prohibition notices issued for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87. More recent information is not available.

	1985-86	*1986-87*
Workplace visits	252,600	[1]245,100
Accident investigations	21,900	21,850
Improvement notices	5,585	6,570
Prohibition notices	2,343	2,900

[1] Data provisional.

The number of premises on the Registers of the Inspectorates of the Health and Safety executive at 1 April for the last three years is as follows.

	1985	1986	1987
Number of registered premises	727,000	723,000	[1]717,000

[1] Data provisional.

These figures exclude an unknown number of sites subject to inspection by HSE inspectors, but not recorded on the registers—for example construction sites, very small agricultural holdings and tips and landfill sites.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how frequently the average (i) factory, (ii) building site and (iii) office is inspected by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: A record of the information requested is not kept and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* *(a)* the number of prosecutions and the number of convictions under the Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act 1974, with the average fine, for each year from 1974 to the latest available date, *(b)* the number of convictions, and the average fine, under the Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act 1984 against (i) employees and (ii) employers for each year from 1984 to the latest available date and *(c)* the number of imprisonments under the Health and Safety at Work, Etc. Act 1984 for each year from 1984 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: *(a)* The table shows the available information for 1975 to 1986-87.

Year	Number of Prosecutions: informations laid			Number of Convictions obtained			Average fine per conviction		
	All[1 2]	FAID[3]	FI[4]	All[1 2]	FAID[3]	FI[4]	All[1 2]	FAID[3]	FI[4]
1975	—	—	2,956	—	—	2,732	—	—	81
1976	—	—	2,174	—	—	2,010	—	—	94
1977	—	—	2,814	—	—	2,546	—	—	105
1978	—	—	2,603	—	—	2,364	—	—	134
1979	—	2,427	—	—	2,227	—	—	184	—
1980	—	2,624	—	—	2,416	—	—	180	—
1981	—	1,892	—	—	1,654	—	—	189	—
1982	—	2,342	—	—	2,057	—	—	233	—
1983	2,238	—	—	1,941	—	—	252	—	—
1984	2,207	—	—	1,942	—	—	310	—	—
1985	2,313	—	—	1,915	—	—	437	—	—
1986-87[5]	2,175	—	—	1,756	—	—	427	—	—

[1] Data include prosecutions taken by factory and agricultural inspectorate, explosives inspectorate, Her Majesty's mines and quarries inspectorate, railway inspectorate and the petroleum engineering division of the Department of Energy, but exclude the pollution inspectorate (formerly the industrial air pollution inspectorate).

[2] All figures exclude the results of prosecutions taken by local authorities. The latest information for local authorities relates to 1985, for which we know of about 250 informations laid under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and 200 under other associated legislation. For 1985, the number of convictions was about 420 in total. No information is collected on the average fine.

[3] Factory and agricultural inspectorate only.

[4] Factory inspectorate only.

[5] Provisional data for the 12 month period April 1986 to March 1987.

(b) The available information for number of convictions and average fine for prosecutions against employees and employers, for all cases taken by Her Majesty's factory and Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate is as follows:

Year	Convictions against			
	Employees		Employers	
	Number	Average fine	Number	Average fine
1984	34	64	1,671	315
1985	64	258	1,605	426
[1]1986-87	78	143	1,460	455

[1] Provisional.

(c) In 1985, one person was given a suspended prison sentence of one month. In 1987, one person was given two suspended prison sentences of nine months (to run consecutively).

Job Training Scheme (Dundee)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places have been available on the job training scheme in the Dundee area for each week since it started; how many of these were occupied; and what was the weekly drop-out rate.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply. Information is not available in the form requested. The number of new job training scheme places contracted in Dundee to March 1988 (including the pilot period from November 1986 to March 1987) total 1,700 of which 649 places have been occupied and 525 people have left before completing the scheme.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a public inquiry into the way in which the Risley remand centre is being run, with particular reference to the suicides which have occurred there in the recent past.

Mr. John Patten: No, but Risley is to be inspected next year by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons, and we shall

be studying his report with particular care. Each incident of suicide is carefully analysed to see whether there are any lessons to be learned for prevention.

Fire Services

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the level of resources devoted to the fire services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received applications from six of the seven fire and civil defence authorities to have their expenditure levels for 1988-89, which my right hon. Friend announced last July, re-determined at a higher amount. In addition to meeting delegations from two fire and civil defence authorities, my noble Friend the Minister of State has seen a delegation of hon. Members representing west Yorkshire constituencies to discuss the provision for that authority. In addition, we receive from time to time representations from individuals and organisations about a variety of matters relating to fire service resources.

Registration

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been instigated under regulation 29 of The Representation of the People Regulations 1986 in respect of failure to complete registration form A.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Regulation 29 of The Representation of the People Regulations 1986 came into effect on 11 July 1986. The information held centrally, which may be incomplete, shows no prosecutions under regulation 29 in 1986.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were *(a)* the categories of and *(b)* the numbers of individual doses of drugs administered to inmates at Her Majesty's prison Holloway in the latest available year.

Mr. John Patten: The following information relates to the financial year 1986-87.

Number of doses of medicine administered to inmates of Her Majesty's prison, Holloway

	Number
(1) Medicines available without prescription in the community	120,844
(2) Psychotropic drugs (ie. antidepressants, sedatives and tranquillisers)	77,841
(3) Hypnotic drugs	21,911
(4) Drugs acting on the central nervous system other than those shown in (2) and (3)	28,237
(5) Other drugs and medicines	132,079

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of inmates in Her Majesty's prison Holloway are imprisoned for drug-related offences.

Mr. John Patten: Information on offences is not complete. However, on 30 June 1987 about 30 per cent. of the sentenced population of Holloway prison was known to be serving sentences for drugs offences.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost of drugs dispensed to inmates of Her Majesty's prison Holloway.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the form requested is not available. In the financial year 1986-87 the cost of procuring medicines and other pharmaceutical items, including small items of equipment for surgical and other medical uses, was £58,749.

Sex Shops

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to define the proportion of total value of sales by a shop, other than a licensed sex shop, for it to be regarded as sufficiently significant for the sex shop licensing provisions to be applied.

Mr. Renton: We do not believe that such legislation would be helpful.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from local authorities on the increase in the number of shops, other than licensed sex shops, selling sex toys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

Rampton Hospital

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many patients released from Rampton hospital since 1979 have committed crimes of violence and have been returned to safe custody; and what is the total number released for each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only information readily available is that during the period 1971-80 there were 77 restricted patients conditionally discharged from Rampton hospital. Of these, four were convicted within five years of their discharge of a further serious offence and given a prison sentence. None were given a further hospital order (with or without restrictions). Information on the number of restricted patients released from Rampton hospital is as follows:

Restricted patients discharged from Rampton 1979-86

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Conditional discharge:								
By Home Secretary	10	14	16	3	9	8	1	1
By Mental Health Review Tribunal	—	—	—	—	—	7	5	8
Absolute discharge:								
By Home Secretary	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
By Mental Health Review Tribunal	—	—	—	—	1	2	5	6

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Other discharge into the community	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Total	11	14	17	3	10	18	11	15

Sidney John Manley

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations were made to his Department by Bradford probation service regarding Sidney John Manley.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In October 1986 the west Yorkshire probation service sought the views of the Home Office on the possibility of recalling Mr. Manley to hospital following breach of the conditions of his probation order. It was decided that recall to hospital was not justified.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the conviction of Sidney John Manley for manslaughter, he will institute a review of release procedures from Rampton hospital and other secure hospitals to take into account representations by patients to stay inside such prisons rather than accept release; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A review was conducted earlier this year of the handling of Mr. Manley's case. As a result, we were satisfied that on the basis of information available at the time (which included Mr. Manley's views on his discharge to a hostel) it was right to agree to his conditional discharge from Rampton in November 1981. We were also satisfied that at no time subsequently was Mr. Manley regarded as a sufficient risk to the public to justify recalling him, under the Mental Health Act, to hospital. We are, nevertheless, looking at the case again to see if there are any lessons to be learned.

Crossbows

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to bring crossbows under similar control as firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Crossbows Act 1987, which came into effect this year on 15 July, introduced controls on the sale of crossbows to, and the purchase and unsupervised possession of crossbows by, persons under the age of 17. We shall continue to keep under close review the need for any additional measures.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

Q28. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the Republic of South Africa in 1988.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Butter Surplus

Q45. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the recent report of the European Court of Auditors regarding the legality of the transfer of responsibilities for the cost of subsidised exports of butter surplus to member states; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The EC Commission does not consider that the measure contravenes any financial rules. It will permit disposals of surplus butter, which would otherwise not have been possible, without adding to the immediate pressures on the Community budget.

EEC (Shipbuilding Intervention Fund)

Q51. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to propose a review of the criteria governing eligibility for assistance through the EEC shipbuilding intervention fund; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. Only in very exceptional circumstances, in particular where vital defence interests were at stake, could intervention fund support be available to any of the yards recently disposed of by British Shipbuilders.

Research Assistant (Security Pass)

Q58. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she has taken to investigate the alleged passing of information from the security services to the *News of the World* regarding the suspension of a security pass for the research assistant of the hon. Member for Islington, North.

The Prime Minister: None.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all official visits made by Ministers to the area of the London Docklands development corporation since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: Ministers have made a large number of visits to London's docklands. Not all are organised by the London Docklands development corporation, and no central list is therefore available. Visits during 1987 have included the following:

12 February 1987
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Trippier).

27 February 1987
Minister for Local Government, Department of the Environment (Dr. Rhodes Boyson).

2 April 1987
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Tracey).

5 May 1987
Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Waddington).

16 July 1987
Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Ridley).

24 July 1987
Minister of State for Energy, Department of Energy (Mr. Morrison).

14 October 1987
Minister for Local Government, Department of the Environment (Mr. Howard).

19 October 1987
Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Trippier).

4 November 1987
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Lord Young).

12 November 1987
Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Trippier).
18 November 1987
Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment (Mr. Trippier).

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if there has been any change of policy since May 1979 regarding the export of equipment and know-how to make weapons grade plutonium to other countries; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 27 October 1987 at column *217*.

Saladin Security and Keenie Meenie Services

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister whether the United Kingdom Government has entered into any contract with *(a)* Saladin Security and *(b)* Keenie Meenie Services since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Details of contracts placed by other Government Departments are not recorded centrally. Records for my office are readily available only from April 1984. No contracts have been placed with, or payment made to, Saladin Security Ltd., or Keenie Meenie Services Ltd. by or on behalf of my office during that period.

As far as KMS is concerned, I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers given to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 10 March 1987 and 17 March 1987, and to the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) on 24 March 1987 at column *102*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions since 1979 representatives of Her Majesty's Government discussed the use of Keenie Meenie Services or Saladin Security with Colonel Oliver North; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to answer questions about the details of discussions which may have taken place with foreign Governments.

Engagements

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

Mr. Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 1 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Denmark.

ENERGY

Electricity Industry

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the level of investment and depreciation by the Central Electricity Generating Board in each of the years since 1975; and how much of the investment programme is funded by the depreciation programme.

Mr. Parkinson: The purpose of the depreciation provision is to write down the value of existing assets over their estimated useful lives. The CEGB has not created a fund for future investment. Depreciation does contribute to the CEGB's cash flow but as the table demonstrates, the level of depreciation does not determine the rate of investment or vice versa.

£ million

	Capital expenditure	*Depreciation*
1975-76	462	262
1976-77	534	266
1977-78	501	386
1978-79	515	401
1979-80	603	424
1980-81	688	690
1981-82	836	805
1982-83	909	922
1983-84	965	844
1984-85	880	892
1985-86	745	958
1986-87	616	1,082

Source: CEGB Annual Report and Accounts.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the depreciation fund of the electricity supply industry will be used towards the cost of the investment programme to offset the replacement of existing assets.

Mr. Parkinson: Depreciation has been provided by the industry to write off existing assets over their estimated useful lives. The electricity supply industry does not have a depreciation fund which is available for future investment.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department last surveyed the energy efficiency of the lighting of his Department's buildings; and what were the conclusions.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department regularly monitors the efficiency of the lighting in our main building where we are the principal tenant; savings attributable to this cannot be identified separately from the overall savings in electricity consumption, which are 7 per cent. in 1986-87.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate his Department has made of *(a)* the gross and net expenditure on the fast breeder reactor programme in 1986-87, and *(b)* expenditure on fusion research in 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Expenditure by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on fast reactor and fusion research in 1986-87 was £120 million (£109 million net of electricity receipts from the Dounreay protoype fast

reactor) and £42 million respectively. The Department of Energy's share of this expenditure under the 1986-87 programme letters was £105 million on fast reactor and £22 million on fusion.

Electricity Supply Industry

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy, in the forthcoming plans to privatise the electricity supply industry, to ensure that the owner-operators of new private power companies include a component of *(a)* electricity generated by renewable means such as wind, wave or tidal power and *(b)* incentives for electricity saving technologies in their operating licence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is considering a range of options for the future of the privatised electricity industry and for the regulatory arrangements which will be needed. No decisions have yet been taken.

Collieries (Wage Earners)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of wage earners on colliery books for each year since 1979 and give the most recent figure available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from British Coal Corporation that the number of wage earners on colliery books for each financial year since 1979 and up to 21 November 1987 are as follows:

	Number
31 March 1979	232,398
29 March 1980	233,163
28 March 1981	224,841
27 March 1982	212,843
26 March 1983	202,669
31 March 1984	181,083
30 March 1985	171,379
29 March 1986	138,490
28 March 1987	109,944
21 November 1987	104,079

SCOTLAND

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those sites where the dumping of hazardous waste is authorised; and what wastes are involved at each site.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Twenty-three landfill waste disposal sites authorised to accept significant quantities of hazardous wastes are listed in the table. The main wastes involved are indicated. Other sites may be authorised by the 56 Scottish waste disposal authorities, the district and islands councils, to accept hazardous wastes but under conditions which limit their significance.

Address of landfill waste disposal site	*Waste disposal authority area*	*Significant hazardous waste components authorised*
Central Region		
Kinneil Kerse Tip, Bo'ness Foreshore, Bo'ness	Falkirk DC	Asbestos and toxic industrial wastes
West Carron, Carron Road, Falkirk	Falkirk DC	Asbestos
Lower Polmaise, Fallin, Stirling	Stirling DC	Asbestos
Fife Region		
East Forthar Farm, Kingskettle, Ladybank	North East Fife DC	Dyestuffs waste
Grampian Region		
Little Clinterty, Clinterty, Aberdeen	City of Aberdeen DC	Some chemical wastes
Blackdog Farm (North), Bridge of Don	Gordon DC	Asbestos
Highland Region		
Council Site, Brackletter, Spean Bridge	Lochaber DC	Asbestos
Lothian Region		
Levenseat Landfill Ltd, Levenseat Quarry, Fauldhouse	West Lothian	Asbestos
Strathclyde Region		
Stevenston Works Tip, Stevenston	Cunninghame DC	Chemical industry wastes
Greenoakhill Tip, Hamilton Road, Broomhouse, Glasgow	City of Glasgow DC	Major site for toxic waste
Craignaught Quarry, Dunlop	Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	Asbestos
Gartverrie Quarry, Glenboig	Monklands DC	Asbestos
Lanarkshire Lagoons, Ravenscraig Works, Motherwell	Motherwell DC	Industrial sludges
Coke Ovens Area, Ravenscraig Works, Motherwell	Motherwell DC	Emergency disposal of coke manufacturing effluents into boreholes
Tweeniehills Quarry, Kilbarchan	Renfrew DC	Tanning wastes
Birdston, Kirkintilloch	Strathkelvin DC	Major site for toxic liquids and industrial wastes
Tayside Region		

Address of landfill waste disposal site	*Waste disposal authority area*	*Significant hazardous waste components authorised*
Lochead Farm Landfill Site, Forfar	Angus DC	Asbestos
Leysmill Quarry, Leysmill, Arbroath	Angus DC	Asbestos
Leoch and Fallows Quarries, Rosemill, Dundee	City of Dundee DC	Asbestos
Wellbank Quarry, Wellbank, Dundee	City of Dundee DC	Asbestos
Huntingtowerfield Bleachworks, Almondbank, Perth	Perth and Kinross DC	Bleachworks residues
Luncarty Bleachfield, Luncarty, Perth	Perth and Kinross DC	Bleachworks residues
Shetland Islands		
Sullom Voe Terminal, Calback Ness, Shetland Islands	Shetland Islands Council	Oil contaminated soil

Tobacco Industry

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent employment has declined in the tobacco manufacturing industry in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Employment in the tobacco industry in Scotland fell from 3,200 in 1978 to 2,800 in 1981. Estimates from the 1984 census of employment cannot be disclosed for reasons of confidentiality.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of spending in (i) Strathclyde and (ii) Scotland as a whole on *(a)* primary education, *(b)* secondary education, *(c)* further education and *(d)* nursery education was met by Government grant and what proportion was met by local authorities, in 1979 and 1987, or the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to provide a breakdown as requested. Government grant in respect of local authority relevant expenditure, aggregate exchequer grant, is composed of specific grants and the rate support grant. There are no specific grants available to finance any one of the broad categories of expenditure specified. RSG, by far the largest element of AEG, is paid in support of local authorities' revenue generally and is not hypothecated to individual services. It is not therefore possible to express RSG as a proportion of expenditure on particular services.

European Council Meetings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since his present appointment he has attended the European Council of *(a)* Agriculture and *(b)* Fisheries Ministers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Negotiations at meetings of the European Councils are conducted between member states. The United Kingdom is represented at Agriculture Council meetings by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. At Fisheries Council meetings the United Kingdom is represented by the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for fisheries.

Travel Grants

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average amount of travel grant paid by local authorities to *(a)* all full-time Scottish students in receipt of grants and *(b)* those full-time Scottish students in receipt of grants who submit a claim.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about travel grants paid to students by local authorities is not held centrally.

Assured Tenancies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the combined effect on rent levels of the assured tenancy proposals in the Scottish housing White Paper and the changes in housing benefit proposed from April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under assured tenancies, rents for most new private lettings will be freely negotiated between landlord and tenant, and will thus usually be at market levels. Housing benefit will continue to be available, but one of the objectives of the revised housing benefit scheme is to strengthen the provisions that ensure that benefit is not used to finance rents that are set at unreasonable levels.

Council House Sales

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to tenants at discounted prices which were less than the outstanding loan charges on those houses; what is the total cost of this shortfall to local authorities, and what arrangements have been made to compensate them; and if he will make a statement on the financial consequences of the further provisions proposed in paragraph 3.11 of his recent White Paper on housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the relationship between selling price and outstanding debt is not held centrally. At present, provision is made under the right-to-buy legislation for discount to be restricted in certain instances where the discounted selling price would fall below the amount of debt outstanding. Any disadvantage to authorities by amending these provisions, as the White Paper proposes, would be outweighed by the general benefits accruing to authorities from council house sales.

Housing Finance

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the bids which have been made to his Department by local authorities for housing capital allocations for 1988-89, showing the figures for bids and final allocations of borrowing consent for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Bids for housing capital allocations for 1988-89, which were due to be submitted by 9 November, have not yet been received by the Scottish

Development Department from all housing authorities. Bids for 1987-88 and the related final gross capital allocations, issued in March 1987, are given in the table.

Gross housing capital allocations 1987-88£ million

Authority	*Housing revenue account*		*Non-housing revenue account*	
	Authority's bid	*Issued allocation*	*Authority's bid*	*Issued allocation*
Berwickshire	0·800	0·800	0·500	0·450
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1·600	1·550	0·465	0·425
Roxburgh	4·669	3·748	1·00	0·500
Tweeddale	1·233	1·230	0·275	0·250
Clackmannan	5·679	4·250	0·813	0·400
Falkirk	15·854	13·500	2·007	1·400
Stirling	8·500	7·332	1·240	1·100
Annandale and Eskdale	3·617	3·502	0·390	0·375
Nithsdale	8·720	6·100	0·884	0·750
Stewartry	1·750	1·750	0·350	0·325
Wigtown	3·337	3·200	0·985	0·725
Dunfermline[1]	13·253	11·000	1·125	1·125
	16·028	—	—	—
Kirkcaldy	13·479	11·000	1·451	1·300
North East Fife	3·934	3·999	2·295	1·450
Aberdeen	49·978	16·500	7·265	4·300
Banff and Buchan	4·474	4·300	1·250	1·100
Gordon	9·720	7·775	0·950	0·825
Kincardine and Deeside	4·525	4·365	0·720	0·650
Moray	5·377	5·261	1·139	1·055
Badenoch and Strathspey	0·789	0·789	0·300	0·295
Caithness	4·363	3·500	1·575	1·150
Inverness	6·132	5·000	1·350	1·050
Lochaber	6·937	4·100	0·400	0·350
Nairn	1·092	1·050	0·190	0·125
Ross and Cromarty	6·783	5·917	2·010	2·010
Skye and Lochalsh	2·174	2·071	1·010	0·950
Sutherland	2·143	2·115	1·220	0·900
East Lothian[1]	9·828	8·627	2·860	1·800
	39·639	—	—	—
Edinburgh	41·916	28·000	34·920	34·520
Midlothian	5 000	4·763	0·750	0·750
West Lothian	7·566	7·566	1·500	0·950
Argyll and Bute	5·617	4·750	4·969	4·250
Bearsden and Milngavie	1·377	1·350	0·600	0·450
Clydebank[1]	7·037	5·900	1·086	1·000
	12·442	—	—	—
Clydesdale	2·945	2·800	0·560	0·500
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2·095	1·850	0·200	0·200
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3·550	3·300	0·300	0·200
Cunninghame	13·701	6·615	3·750	2·500
Dumbarton[1]	10·606	5·900	1·130	0·700
	22·240	—	—	—
East Kilbride	0·638	0·646	0·262	0·262
Eastwood	1·105	1·101	0·200	0·250
Glasgow	140·000	83·400	78·000	53·000
Hamilton	9·121	7·750	1·462	1·100
Inverclyde	7·945	6·700	2·800	2·780
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5·809	5·647	0·507	0·255
Kyle and Carrick	6·832	6·832	0·680	0·550
Monklands	12·809	11·000	0·700	0·550
Motherwell	12·000	12·000	0·890	0·750
Renfrew	20·722	16·914	3·100	3·100
Strathkelvin	8·510	5·250	0·413	0·413
Angus	4·373	4·821	0·762	0·762
Dundee	23·108	16·500	5·540	5·000
Perth and Kinross	5·317	5·270	2·280	2·130
Orkney	1·459	1·000	1·400	1·300
Shetland	5·565	5·200	1·262	0·900
Western Isles	4·482	4·200	4·763	4·763

[1] These authorities submitted bids prepared on different bases.

Homeless Persons (Housing)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act have been made as a result of mortgage defaults or arrears in each of the last four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of applicant households who quoted a court order for mortgage default as a reason for the loss or threatened loss of their last or present accommodation are as follows:

	Number
1984-85	508
1985-86	831
1986-87	[1]808

[1] Provisional figure.

This category of applicant household was not separately identified prior to March 1984.

Legal Aid

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce amendments to the legal aid regulations to restore the principle that legal aid claims should automatically be retrospectively granted for the conduct of an appeal to a higher court where such an appeal is successful.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is one of several aspects of the legal aid regime on which I have received representations. I hope to reach a view on all the proposals made to me before the end of the year.

Rating Reform

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total cost to his Department of preparing and printing *(a)* the pamphlet "The New Community Charge — How Will it Work For You" and *(b)* the newspaper advertisements concerning the community charge.

Mr. Rifkind: The cost to my Department of preparing and printing the newspaper advertisements and pamphlet for the current community charge information campaign is:

	£
Advertisements	105,600
Leaflet (initial 20,000 copies)	2,627
Agents production fees	13,660

These figures do not include VAT.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which newspapers and magazines he intends to publish his advertisements concerning the community charge, on how many occasions he intends to publish them; and what is the estimated cost of this advertising.

Mr. Rifkind: A public information advertising campaign is currently appearing in the following national, Scottish daily, Sunday and local weekly newspapers. A list of these is appended. Advertisements will appear in nine national, Scottish daily and Sunday newspapers on a total of 19 occasions, and in 119 local weekly newspapers on a total of 125 occasions. The total cost will be £105,600 plus VAT.

Daily Record
Aberdeen Press & Journal
Dundee Courier & Advertiser
Glasgow Herald
Scottish Daily Express
The Scotsman
Sun (Scottish Edition)
Sunday Post
The Sunday Mail
Ellon & District Advertiser
Inverurie & District Advertiser
Turriff & District Advertiser
Annandale Herald
Annandale Observer
Moffat News
Dumfries Courier (free)
Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald
Irvine Times
Ayr Advertiser & Troon Times
Carrick Herald
Cumnock Chronicle
Largs & Millport Weekly News
Ayrshire Extra (free)
Banffshire Advertiser
Banffshire Herald
Huntly Express
Montrose Review
The Leader (Mearns)
Kincardinshire Observer
Northern Scot
Banffshire Journal
Forres Gazette
Strathspey & Badenoch Herald
Northern Scot Midweek Extra (free)
Dalkeith Advertiser
East Lothian News
Livingston Post
Musselburgh News
South Midlothian Advertiser
Ayrshire Post
Dumfries & Galloway Standard
Dumfries News
East Kilbride News
Irvine Herald
Kilmarnock Standard
Galloway News
Lennox Herald (Dumbarton)
Perthshire Advertiser
Lothian Courier
Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser
Border Telegraph
Hamilton Advertiser
Peebleshire News
Rutherglen Reformer
Wishaw Press
Stirling Observer
Livingston Courier
Blairgowrie Advertiser
Paisley Daily Express
Ayrshire World (free)
Airdrie & Coatbridge World (free)
East Kilbride World (free)
Hamilton World (free)
Wishaw World (free)
Renfrewshire World (free)
Stirling Shopper (free)
Lothian World (free)
Perth Shopper (free)
Carrick Gazette & Girvan News
Galloway Gazette & Stranraer News
Campbeltown Courier & Argyllshire Advertiser
Oban Times
Dunfermline Press & West of Fife Advertiser
Central Fife Times & Advertiser
Falkirk Herald
Cumbernauld News & Kilsyth Chronicle
Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette
Fife Free Press
East Fife Mail
Glenrothes Gazette
Kirkintillock Herald
Milngavie & Bearsden Herald
Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette
Johnstone & Linwood Gazette
Barrhead News
Glasgow South Side & Eastwood Mercury
Bellshill Speaker
Lanark Gazette

County Reporter (Dunbarton)
Helensburgh Advertiser
Motherwell Times
St. Andrew's Citizen
Fife Herald
Bishopbriggs Herald
Clydebank Post
Inverness & Highland News
Lochaber News
North Star
Caithness Courier
John O'Groat Journal
Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser
Wigtown Free Press & Stranraer Advertiser
Buchan Observer
Fraserburgh Herald
Inverness Courier
Nairnshire Telegraph
Northern Times
Ross-shire Journal
West Highland Free Press
East Lothian Courier
The Orcadian
Shetland Times
Arran Banner
The Buteman
Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard
Arbroath Herald
Broughty Ferry Guide
Brechin Advertiser
Deeside Piper
Forfar Dispatch
Kirriemuir Herald
Strathearn Herald
Stornoway Gazette
Berwick Advertiser
Berwickshire News
Southern Reporter
Hawick News
Alloa & Hillfoots Advertiser Journal

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what maximum payment of community charge, including community water charge, would have been payable by pensioners on basic retirement pension income, in the current financial year, for each district, island and regional authority; and if he will express each sum payable as a percentage of the total community charge in that area.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The information requested in respect of 1987-88 is set out in the table.

Authority	*Personal community charge*	*Community water charge*	*Total Liability*	*Maximum rebate*	*Total payable*	*(Total payable) total community charge per cent.*
Borders	173	24	197	138	59	30
Berwickshire	170	24	195	136	58	30
Ettrick and Lauderdale	171	24	195	137	58	30
Roxburgh	176	24	201	141	60	30
Tweeddale	170	24	194	136	58	30
Central	209	16	225	167	58	26
Clackmannan	205	16	222	164	57	26
Falkirk	197	16	213	157	56	26
Stirling	233	16	249	186	63	25
Dumfries and Galloway	172	18	190	138	52	27
Annandale and Eskdale	174	18	192	139	52	27
Nithsdale	174	18	192	139	52	27
Stewartry	172	18	190	138	52	27
Wigtown	166	18	183	132	50	28
Fife	216	17	234	173	61	26
Dunfermline	208	17	225	167	59	26
Kirkcaldy	220	17	237	176	61	26
North East Fife	224	17	241	180	62	26
Grampian	162	27	189	130	59	31
Aberdeen City	173	27	200	138	61	31
Banff and Buchan	153	27	180	122	57	32
Gordon	161	27	188	129	59	31
Kincardine and Deeside	149	27	175	119	56	32
Moray	150	27	176	120	57	32
Highland	186	21	207	149	58	28
Badenoch and Strathspey	187	21	208	150	58	28
Caithness	185	21	205	148	58	28
Inverness	184	21	205	148	58	28
Lochaber	196	21	217	157	60	28
Nairn	188	21	208	150	58	28
Ross and Cromarty	192	21	212	153	59	28
Skye and Lochalsh	180	21	200	144	57	28
Sutherland	176	21	197	141	56	28
Lothian	260	26	285	208	77	27
East Lothian	263	26	289	211	78	27
Edinburgh City	264	26	289	211	78	27
Midlothian	255	26	281	204	76	27
West Lothian	247	26	272	197	75	28
Strathclyde	261	18	279	209	70	25

Authority	Personal community charge	Community water charge	Total Liability	Maximum rebate	Total payable	(Total payable) total community charge per cent.
Argyll and Bute	252	18	270	202	68	25
Bearsden and Milngavie	271	18	289	217	72	25
Clydebank	250	18	268	200	68	25
Clydesdale	246	18	263	196	67	25
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	248	18	266	198	67	25
Cumnock and Doon Valley	239	18	256	191	66	26
Cunninghame	262	18	279	209	70	25
Dumbarton	264	18	281	211	71	25
East Kilbride	241	18	259	193	66	26
Eastwood	251	18	269	201	68	25
Glasgow City	276	18	294	221	73	25
Hamilton	257	18	275	206	69	25
Inverclyde	245	18	263	196	67	25
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	250	18	268	200	68	25
Kyle and Carrick	256	18	274	205	69	25
Monklands	249	18	266	199	68	25
Motherwell	244	18	262	195	67	26
Renfrew	265	18	283	212	71	25
Strathkelvin	256	18	274	205	69	25
Tayside	219	19	238	175	63	26
Angus	200	19	219	160	59	27
Dundee City	236	19	256	189	67	26
Perth and Kinross	207	19	226	166	61	27
Orkney Islands	75	27	101	60	42	41
Shetland Islands	95	7	102	76	26	25
Western Isles	96	21	117	76	40	34
All Scotland	233	20	253	186	67	26

Housing Statistics

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for the latest date at which figures are available the numbers and percentages of Scottish households which are *(a)* owner-occupied, *(b)* rented from local authorities, *(c)* rented from the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(d)* rented from other housing associations, *(e)* rented from private sector landlords and *(f)* part of a co-operative scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Quarterly information on tenure of stock of dwellings is published in table 2.24 of Part 2 of "Housing and Construction Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of home owners in Scotland who were *(a)* in arrears with mortgage payments or *(b)* faced with building society repossession of their home in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available.

Regional Development

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the annual expenditure for each year since 1972 on industrial support and development in Scotland; and how much of it was on *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* regional selective assistance.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* Gross expenditure on activities which are now classified to the industry programme of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is set out below for each year since 1974-75; the information requested is not available for earlier years. In addition, a number of other Departments have incurred expenditure in Scotland on industrial support and development; comprehensive information on these is not available for the period considered.

Year	Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment (excluding tourism) (£ million)	Regional selective assistance and related schemes (£ million)	Regional[1] Development Grant (RDG) (£ million)
1974-75	73·8	5·4	61·6
1975-76	126·5	9·1	98·5
1976-77	145·4	8·0	108·2
1977-78	187·0	17·9	105·0
1978-79	209·8	14·2	107·3
1979-80	195·0	17·5	70·2
1980-81	260·4	21·4	113·3
1981-82	295·9	17·8	142·7
1982-83	470·3	20·5	287·3
1983-84	335·5	26·1	143·0
1984-85	318·3	37·0	109·2
1985-86	340·8	52·7	107·5
1986-87	388·0	43·3	170·2

[1] The figures for RDG include small amounts for transfers to Local Authorities and New Towns. These are not classed as direct public expenditure and are not included in the Industry, Energy, Trade and Employment totals above.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Inner London Education Authority

13. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the break-up of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Dunn: About 5,000.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities

18. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the financing of education ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have regular meetings with the local authority associations to discuss matters relating to education provision. I last met them on 21 October to discuss the Government's plans for local authority spending on education in 1988-89 and my proposals for education reform. No further meeting has been arranged.

Polytechnic Designations

19. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about further designations as polytechnics ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has received 14 representations since the publication in April of our White Paper on higher education, advocating the designation of six different institutions as polytechnics.

Further and Higher Education Institutions

20. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional capital resources available to further and higher education institutions for accommodation and equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Further to the Autumn Statement's substantial increases in the resources for education, I can now announce that capital allocations to local authorities in England for accommodation and equipment for further and higher education will be £50 million in 1988-89—an increase of £7 million or 16 per cent. over the corresponding figure for 1987-88.

Rural Schools

21. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will initiate a study on the effects of his Department's opt-out proposals on the use of schools in rural areas as community centres.

Mr. Dunn: No. Where a school which allows its premises to be used by the wider community seeks to opt out from local authority control there is no reason why community access should not be preserved.

Scottish Universities

22. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to meet the University Grants Committee to discuss the funding of Scottish universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: No. The Government fully support the University Grants Committee's more objective approach for allocating recurrent grant which applies the same criteria to all universities. The impact on individual universities has varied depending on their previous funding level and on their research record. Three of the eight Scottish universities received increases in basic grant for 1987-88 above the Great Britain average.

National Curriculum

23. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about the proposed national curriculum.

48. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received concerning proposals for a national curriculum.

56. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received over the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo).

49. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made any further analysis of the resource implications of the proposals contained in the consultative document "National Curriculum 5-16"; and if he will make a statement.

74. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has made any further analysis of the resource implications of his national curriculum proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 3 November at column 645 that about £65 million over three years is to be provided to fund work in support of the Government's proposals for a national curriculum, including the work of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council. The Government will also support the development of the national curriculum through education support grants and through training grants for teachers. The overall pupil-teacher ratio for 1987, at 17·3:1, is at its lowest ever level. The Government's expenditure plans allow for a further improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio to 17:1 by 1990. It will be for local education authorities and schools, within the planned level of resources, to ensure that staffing, as well as spending on support services, books and equipment, are directed to achieve the national policy; our aim is to achieve better value for money from the resources already being provided. Any particular requirements which emerge as local education authorities and governing bodies put the proposals into practice will fall to be considered in future public expenditure discussions.

Secondary Education (Epping Forest)

24. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why, in view of Her Majesty's Government's intended changes in the education system, designed to give more choice and influence to parents, he accepted in advance of those changes proposals of the Essex education authority for the

reorganisation of secondary education in Epping forest, which involved the ending of single sex education in the maintained sector there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: These proposals were made under the Education Act 1980 and my right hon. Friend carried out his statutory duty to consider them under that legislation. He concluded that on balance the advantages they offered outweighed their disadvantages, including the loss of single sex provision.

Higher Education

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of the proposed changes in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has received many responses to the Government's consultations on its higher education policies, including the changes proposed in the current Education Reform Bill.

"Strategy for the Science Base"

26. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the "Strategy for the Science Base" discussion document.

58. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the "Strategy for the Science Base" discussion document.

Mr. Jackson: We have received 231 responses in reply to my right hon. Friend's invitation for comments on the document.

Home Economics

27. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provisions will be made for the teaching of home economics when the new curriculum comes into force.

67. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision is being made for the teaching of home economics after the national core curriculum comes into effect.

Mrs. Rumbold: Home economics is not one of the foundation subjects proposed in the national curriculum provisions of the Education Reform Bill currently before the House. However, we expect that some elements of home economics will be taught through the foundation subjects, particularly science, technology and art. Schools will be free additionally to devote to home economics some of the time which will not be required for the foundation subjects.

Inner London

28. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation paper dealing with the organisation of education in inner London; and if he will make a statement.

43. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the consultation paper dealing with the organisation of education in inner London from people in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* each of the other inner London education authority authorities; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about his consultative document dealing with the reorganisation of education in inner London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). Information about the borough of residence of respondents could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Ethnic Minorities (Swann Report)

29. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to provide additional resources to implement the recommendations of the Swann report on ethnic minorities in education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: In the financial year 1988-89, a further £1·4 million of expenditure will be supported under the education support grant programme for pilot projects related to educational needs in a multi-ethnic society. Training in the planning and delivery of the curriculum in a multi-ethnic society will continue to be a national priority area for school teachers under the local education authority training grants scheme. The scheme also includes a new national priority area for further education teachers. A total of £2 million of expenditure will be supported in 1988-89. Other programmes will continue to take account of the needs of ethnic minorities as identified in the Swann report.

Education Reform Bill

31. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many replies he has now received to his consultative papers on the Education Reform Bill; and how many of these have expressed support for his proposals on *(a)* the allocation of time to foundation subjects, *(b)* testing and attainment targets and *(c)* grant-maintained schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: By 27 November, we had received 18,500 responses to the various consultation documents. Many respondents have commented in some detail on one proposal, and replies could not readily be classified as requested by the hon. Member.

36. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the position under the forthcoming Education Reform Bill regarding children with special needs at schools applying for grant maintained status.

Mr. Dunn: The introduction of grant-maintained schools will not prejudice the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools. Any schools making provision for pupils with special needs will be required to continue to do so on becoming grant-maintained, in keeping with the Government's policy that they should not change their character in the course of attaining that status. My right hon. Friend will approve the admission arrangements for grant-maintained schools,

and there will be arrangements for dealing with complaints if parents feel that these policies are not being complied with. The grant to be received by a grant-maintained school will be equivalent to the funding that it would have received, had it remained with its LEA. Thus, additional costs incurred in providing for any children with special needs will be taken fully into account.

75. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to delay any further decisions on applications from local education authorities for major changes in the local organisation of secondary education and the approval of new tertiary colleges until after his projected Education Reform Bill has received the Royal Assent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. Where statutory proposals for school reorganisation come before my right hon. Friend for decision, he is obliged under existing legislation to consider them on their individual merits. The Department's circular 3/87 makes it clear that my right hon. Friend wishes LEAs to continue to put forward proposals for school reorganisation.

Association of County Councils

30. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations have been made by the Association of County Councils on his consultation papers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Association of County Councils has provided responses to all the main consultation documents. Copies of these responses have been placed in the Library. In addition, the association has written to my right hon. Friend about aspects of the consultation process.

32. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss financial provision for education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with the local authority associations to discuss matters relating to education provision. He last met them on 21 October to discuss the Government's plans for local authority spending on education in 1988-89 and our proposals for education reform. No further meeting has been arranged.

University Technicians (Pay)

33. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the pay of university technicians; and if he will make a statement.

71. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the pay of university technicians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I met representatives of the Association of Technical and Managerial Staffs on 13 October. The Government are not involved in the pay negotiations of university technicians. It is for the universities to negotiate a settlement from within their resources in the light of their overall priorities and having regard to the need to recruit, retain and motivate appropriate staff.

Education Reform

34. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Green Paper for the reform of maintained further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Green Paper for the reform of maintained further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We have had some 350 responses to the consultation paper on the reform of maintained further education, including responses from most local education authorities and many colleges and organisations, as well as from individuals. There have also been meetings with the national bodies most concerned. We have taken careful note of the suggestions that were offered. Some are reflected in the provisions in the Bill now introduced, and others will influence the further development of the proposals.

Schools (Local Authority Control)

35. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* individuals and *(b)* organisations have responded in favour of the proposals to allow schools to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received over 900 written responses from organisations and individuals to his proposals for grant-maintained schools. Many of these contained detailed and constructive comments upon particular aspects of the initiative, but could not readily be categorised as either supporting or opposing the proposals as a whole.

Universities (Recruitment of Women)

37. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to promote recruitment and promotion prospects for women within British universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Universities are autonomous institutions, and the recruitment and promotion of staff are matters for them, within the law.

Academic Freedom

38. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has received to the proposals on academic freedom in universities and other colleges.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has had to his proposals on academic freedom in universities and other colleges.

Mr. Jackson: We have had representations to the effect that our proposals to remove tenure might weaken academic freedom. I refer the hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on 20 November, which explains how the provisions in the Education Reform Bill will in fact strengthen the protection of academic freedom.

Teesside (City Technology College)

39. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards the establishment of a city technology college on Teesside.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt).

O-Level Passes

40. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average number of O-level passes in the upper grades achieved by pupils in the fifth years of grammar schools, independent schools and comprehensive schools, respectively, in the most recent current period for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the examination achievements in the fifth year is not available, but that for school leavers is shown in the following table:

School Leavers, England 1985-86
Number of higher[1] grade GCE O level or CSE passes per leaver

Type of school[2]	*Number*
Grammar	6·9
Independent	6·8
Comprehensive (including sixth form colleges)	2·3

Notes:
[1] Higher grades are O level grades A-C and CSE grade 1.
[2] The type of school attended immediately before leaving.
Source: School Leavers Survey.
Note: Data subject to sampling error.

Students (Financial Support)

41. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he is considering for student financial support.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are conducting a general review of arrangements for the financial support of undergraduates in Great Britain. The review's terms of reference require it to have regard to sources of support which would allow the removal of students from the social security system, including the case for a system involving loans as well as grants, and the contribution of sponsorship.

Aberdeen University (Funding)

42. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the criteria used by the University Grants Committee in its funding plans for Aberdeen university.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986-87, the University Grants Committee introduced a new method for allocating recurrent grant. This applies the same criteria to all universities, wherever they are located, and is based on standard units of resource for teaching and explicit selectivity in the funding of research. This more objective approach has led to Aberdeen university's receiving below average increases in basic grant. The university is in discussion with the UGC about the careful planning needed for the transition to the new funding levels.

Tertiary Education

44. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to encourage the growing trend toward tertiary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities in the first instance to consider how to organise school provision in their areas. The Department's circular 3/87 makes clear that my right hon. Friend neither requires nor rules out any one pattern of organisation.

Expenditure

45. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was spent on education in 1979; and what is his latest estimate of outturn in 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: Public expenditure on education within the responsibility of my Department was £8,605 million in 1979-80. The estimated outturn for 1987-88 is £16,512 million. This represents an increase of 11 per cent. in real terms.

Polytechnics and Colleges (Funding)

46. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional resources will be made available in 1988-89 to facilitate the transition from local authority to polytechnics and colleges funding council control of those institutions named in the White Paper "Meeting The Challenge".

61. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional resources will be made available in 1988-89 to facilitate the transition from local authority to polytechnics and colleges funding council control of those institutions named in the White Paper "Meeting The Challenge".

Mr. Jackson: In his statement on 3 November about plans for expenditure on education and science in 1988-89, my right hon. Friend announced that £9 million would be made available in that year to enable polytechnics and colleges to assume responsibility for managing their own affairs.

Testing and Assessment

47. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to his consultation document about testing and assessment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the effects of competition and testing in the schooling of children.

Mrs. Rumbold: By 20 November, some 8,800 individuals and organisations had responded to the Government's consultation document on the national curriculum. Many of these have expressed a variety of views about, among other issues, the place of testing and assessment in the national curriculum.

City Technology Colleges

50. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a further statement on the progress towards establishing city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Contract Researchers

52. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the Advisory Board for Research Councils on the current employment conditions of contract researchers.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has had none. However, I have agreed to meet the Association of Researchers in Medicine and Science to discuss its concerns on this issue.

University Grants Committee

54. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee to discuss the future of university research; and if he will make a statement.

63. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he plans to meet representatives of the University Grants Committee in order to discuss future fundings for universities in teaching; and if he will make a statement.

68. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet the chairman of the University Grants Committee in the course of normal business, when matters including university funding and research are discussed.

Foreign Languages

55. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to make available additional resources for the teaching of foreign languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend plans to make available education support grants to some local education authorities in England in 1988-89, to support pilot work on the diversification of first foreign language provision in secondary schools. He will be considering how education support grants and grants for in-service training can best be used in future years to support the introduction of the national curriculum, including foreign languages.

Parent-Teacher Associations

57. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to meet representatives of parent-teacher associations.

Mr. Dunn: My ministerial colleagues and I meet representatives of parent-teacher associations from time to time. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has agreed to meet the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations on Monday 11 January.

Grant-aided Schools

59. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about his proposals for grant-aided schools.

Mr. Dunn: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

Religious Education

60. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to extend the obligation to teach religious education to non-maintained schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: It would be wrong to impose such a requirement in schools which are independent foundations. It is a matter for the judgment of parents whether curricula offered by independent schools meet their requirements with regard to religious education.

Church Leaders

62. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent meetings he has had with church leaders; and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and other ministerial colleagues have, over the past four months, had six meetings with representatives of the Churches; other meetings have been held at official level. The subjects discussed have included almost all the proposals now embodied in the Education Reform Bill.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

64. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will indicate the change that has taken place in teacher-to-pupil ratios since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The overall pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England has fallen from 18·9 in 1979 to 17·3 in 1987.

72. **Mr. Andrew Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figures for teacher-to-pupil ratios in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1987, the pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in England were 21·9 and 15·6 respectively.

Truancy

65. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to monitor levels of truancy.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 26 November.

Schools (Business Links)

66. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with employer organisations about business links with schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I and my officials are in regular contact with a wide range of employers and employer organisations. We aim to help them to decide how they can contribute most effectively, having regard to both educational needs and company priorities.

University Veterinary Schools

69. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any plans to reorganise universities veterinary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As one of a series of subject rationalisation reviews, the University Grants Committee has established a working party on veterinary under the chairmanship of Sir Ralph Riley FRS which is to make recommendations for the committee's consideration.

Science

70. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to make available additional resources for the teaching of science subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is supporting expenditure of £8·3 million in 1987-88 through education support grants to improve the effectiveness of science and technology education in primary schools. This is planned to rise to £8·8 million in 1988-89. The Government are also supporting expenditure of £5·5 million in 1987-88 through the LEA training grants scheme towards in-service training for science teachers. In 1988-89 support for science in-service training will be £5 million and in addition the Government are targeting up to £4 million in 1988-89 for retraining courses for teachers in the shortage subjects of science, maths and CDT.

The Government have taken a number of initiatives to improve the supply of teachers in shortage subjects, including physics and CDT. These initiatives include:

£5 million to higher education institutions for new types of training provision.

Nearly £2 millon in bursaries to trainee teachers.

£0·5 million on other initiatives, including a series of BBC training programmes for serving science teachers.

We are also supporting work at the Open university to develop distance learning packs to assist in the teaching of physics and mathematics.

Shortage Subjects

73. **Mrs. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the number of teachers in shortage subjects in primary and secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the primary phase, where teachers are expected to teach the full primary curriculum, the teaching of maths, science and CDT is being strengthened by Government support for in-service training. In addition, certain teacher training institutions are developing courses with maths and science as subject specialisms.

In secondary schools a number of measures have been taken to improve supply. These include the introduction of a £1,250 bursary scheme, better training opportunities, and the setting up of the Teaching as Career Unit to promote a career in teaching.

Further details are in a DES bulletin "Action on Teacher Shortages: One Year On," which I have placed in the Library.

These measures have made an impact with applications for initial teacher training well up on previous years. Actual recruitment figures will become available shortly.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many secondary school teachers of *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics and *(c)* craft, design and technology ceased to work within the maintained sector in the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87; whether he will list this information by economic region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information for 1985-86 and 1986-87 is not yet available. The numbers of secondary school graduate teachers who left teaching service in the public sector during the 1984-85 financial year, whose first named subject of qualification (other than education) was mathematics or physics, are as follows[1]:

Region	*Graduates (including BEds) in Mathematics*	*Physics*
North	42	21
Yorkshire and Humberside	66	28
North West	70	35
East Midlands	47	28
West Midlands	66	33
East Anglia	20	12
Greater London	144	54
Other South East	169	74
South West	68	29
Total England	692	314

[1] Figures for non-graduates by subject, including Craft, Design and Technology are not available.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of applications for post-graduate certificate of education courses in *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics, *(c)* craft, design and technology for the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of applications for PGCE secondary courses in England and Wales in these subjects was:

Subject	*Applications for courses in academic year 1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Mathematics	1,502	1,234	1,140
Physics	695	535	582
CDT	172	169	239

Note: Figures on applications for PGCE primary courses are not disaggregated by subject.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students on post-graduate certificate of education courses in the present academic year are taking *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics or, *(c)* craft, design and technology as their main subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The principal findings of the Department of Education and Science's survey of this

year's recruitment to initial teacher training, including PGCE secondary courses with main specialisms in these subjects, will be available very shortly.

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students on post-graduate certificate of education courses in the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 took *(a)* mathematics, *(b)* physics or *(c)* craft, design and technology as their main subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of students on PGCE secondary courses in England and Wales in these subjects was:

Subject	*Academic year* 1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Mathematics	801	696	741
Physics	408	255	341
CDT	81	93	159

Note: Figures on students admitted to PGCE primary courses are not disaggregated by subject.

GCSE

76. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any local education authorities now making representations to his Department about their state of preparedness for the forthcoming general certificate of secondary education examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations from local education authorities on this matter.

The Government recognise that successful implementation of the GCSE requires continuing commitment from authorities and the education service in general. My right hon. Friend has demonstrated the Government's own continuing commitment in our expenditure plans for 1988-89 which allow for some £87 million local authority expenditure on GCSE non-teaching costs. As in 1987-88, the Government are providing as much as the local authorities say they need. It is for local authorities to ensure that the available resources are targeted on priority needs.

Undergraduates

78. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has plans to introduce mandatory awards for part-time undergraduates on the same basis as awards for full-time undergraduates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's review of student support is considering the possibility of making some form of support available for part-time undergraduate students.

MENCAP

79. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet MENCAP and other voluntary organisations to discuss conductive education.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. He has not received a request for such a meeting from MENCAP or any other voluntary organisation. I met representatives of the group Rapid Action for Conductive Education (RACE) on 29 October and am ready to consider requests for a meeting from other organisations.

Save British Science

80. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the funding of research in the light of the speech by Sir James Lighthill FRS at the first annual general meeting of Save British Science, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will provide additional funds earmarked to enable universities to appoint new young people to their staff.

Mr. Jackson: The Government's policy for research is set out in Cmnd 9849, Cm 114 and Cm 185. We are committed to maintaining and enhancing the strength and quality of the science base. To this end, we are seeking to encourage greater concentration and selectivity of research activities, closer and better working with industry and commerce, more funding from private sector sources, better management yielding greater value for money, and increased flexibility enabling faster responses to new scientific opportunities. I was pleased to see that in his speech Sir James Lighthill was broadly supportive of these objectives. As regards new appointments, I announced on 3 November the provision of additional funds for universities, including £155 million over three years for a targeted programme of restructuring, in which some "new blood" appointments will feature.

Indiscipline

81. **Mr. Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards indiscipline in schools, in the light of the report on indiscipline in schools prepared by the Professional Association of Teachers and the *Daily Express*, a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will have discussions with teachers' unions, education authorities and parents' organisations with a view to taking effective steps to tackle the problem.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend deplores any violent behaviour in schools, and urges schools to take positive action to tackle the problem. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 will strengthen the authority of head teachers and governing bodies — which in future will include more parents — by giving them direct responsibility for maintaining discipline.

Sports Injuries (Pupils)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has any system for monitoring the incidence and frequency of injuries to school pupils taking part in sports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My Department does not collect these figures but monitors the general incidence of injuries. Educational establishments, as places of employment, are covered by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) made under the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. 1974. Local education authorities and other education employers are thereby required to provide the Health and Safety Executive, with which my Department works

closely, with written details of specified major injuries sustained by persons (including pupils) for whose activities they are responsible, within seven days of an accident occurring.

This legislation is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mrs. Rumbold: None at present. I understand that British-made recycled paper suitable for general stationery purposes is available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office but that supplies are limited and prices uncompetitive when compared with wood-free printing and writing quality paper. I understand further that Her Majesty's Stationery Office will continue to encourage the greater use of recycled fibre in the paper it purchases.

Waste paper from the Department is collected by contractors and may be used for recycling.

School Building

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has considered any report of the particular needs for improved capital expenditure on school building within the area of the Rotherham education authority.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received, and is studying, the bid by Rotherham local education authority in respect of its plans for capital expenditure in 1988-89 and subsequent years. In addition, I met the hon. Member, his parliamentary colleagues and representatives of the authority in April; and officials have since discussed the capital situation. The points made at those meetings will also be taken into account in considering Rotherham's bid.

School Governors

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to train school governors for their new duties; and if he will make a statement.

53. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to make any provision for the training of school governors to enable them to implement his proposals on school government.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether school governors will be given any special training to enable them to carry out the duties required of them under the Education Bill.

77. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provisions he is proposing to make for the training of school governors so that they can implement his proposals on school government.

Mr. Dunn: The Government recognise that the increasing responsibilities of school governors will reinforce the demand for appropriate training. We intend to discuss what needs to be done with all interested parties, including education authorities, voluntary bodies and the business community.

Students (Travel Costs)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total expenditure by his Department in respect of travel expenses for students in higher education for each academic year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Jackson: The table shows reimbursements to students for excess travel by local education authorities in England and Wales. Up to and including 1982-83, such information was collected centrally in respect of mandatory and full-value discretionary award-holders; and thereafter in respect of mandatory award-holders alone. Following the introduction of a flat rate travel allowance, a diminishing minority of students were entitled to continue claiming travel expenses in excess of the flat rate. Hence the sharp fall in payments from 1984-85 onwards.

Expenditure by local education authorities in England and Wales on excess travel claims.

	£ million
Mandatory and full-value discretionary awards	
1979-80	16·9
1980-81	21·0
1981-82	21·1
1982-83	26·2
Mandatory awards	
1983-84	23·8
1984-85	2·7
1985-86	1·2

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the percentage of students with travel costs in excess of the flat rate travel grant from the academic year 1984-85 to the present.

Mr. Jackson: Information is held centrally only on excess travel payments to students in receipt of mandatory awards from local authorities in England and Wales. Before 1984-85, such students were reimbursed relevant travel expenses in excess of £50; 46 per cent. of them received reimbursement in 1983-84. From 1984-85, a flat rate travel allowance has been incorporated in the main rates of grant. There are provisions for reimbursement of travel costs in excess of these figures in the case of disabled students, students obliged to study away from their normal place of study and students who began their course before September 1984. In 1984-85 5 per cent., and in 1985-86 2 per cent., of students received excess travel payments. Information for 1986-87 is not yet available.

Inner Cities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his achievements with respect to education in the inner cities.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's plans for improving the overall quality of education, which include the establishment of CTCs, will have particular relevance for the needs of the inner cities. A range of existing policies, including the education support grant programmes on ethnic diversity and curriculum development in urban primary schools, together with the REPLAN and adult literacy training schemes are already making a significant contribution to the improvement of educational provision

in the inner cities. In addition, the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1987, which came into force on 1 October, will have a particularly beneficial effect in the inner cities since it allows LEAs not only to pay extra increments to teachers starting work in an urban area but also to give schools extra incentive allowances on criteria which include the difficulties of recruiting and retaining teachers, and various socio-economic factors. My Department also contributes resources to and advises on the running of the urban programme which supports a wide range of educational activities in inner-city areas. Many schools and colleges also receive grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to meet the special needs of pupils and students from ethnic minority backgrounds, many of whom live in inner-city areas.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average weekly pay of manual and non-teaching white collar staff in institutions of higher and further education, as a ratio of the pay of similar grades in private sector industry; and what were the figures in 1981 and 1984.

Mrs. Rumbold: Data on the average weekly pay of manual and non-teaching white collar staff in institutions of higher and further education are not available. The table compares the pay of all manual and administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff in local authority employment, which includes those employed in LEA-maintained further and higher education, with the pay of all manual and non-manual employees in the economy other than those in mostly public sector services.

	£ per week[1]		
	April 1981	*April 1984*	*April 1987*
1. Local Authority manuals	95	113	[3]137
2. All manuals[2]	115	147	176
3. Local Authority APTC	127	155	[3]188
4. All non-manuals[2]	132	175	224

[1] All data are taken from the new earnings survey and reflect gross weekly earnings, including overtime payments.

[2] All employees in the standard industrial classification (SIC) categories 0 to 8 (ie category 9, "other services", is excluded; category 9 employees had to be estimated for 1981 because of the different classification used then).

[3] The figures for local authority staff do not include the 1987 settlements.

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the population of the United Kingdom go on to study in higher and further education; and what information he has as to the proportions in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Sweden, *(c)* West Germany and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Jackson: The readily available information is given in the following table:

	New entrants to higher education[1]			*Participation in education and training of 16 year olds*			
	Year	*Age*	*Participation rate (per 100)*	*Year*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*[2]	*All education and training*[2]
United Kingdom	1984	18-21	[3]31	1983	[4]45	[5]42	87
	1985	18-21	[3]32				
United States of America	1982	18	[6]60	1981	94	—	94
Sweden	1979	na	25	—	na	na	na
West Germany	1984	19-21	27	1981	62	[7]30	92
Japan	1984	18	[6]38	1981	[8]87	[8]2	[8]89

na = Not available.

[1] New entrants (all ages) to full-time and part-time higher education as a percentage of the average population in the most relevant age group. This is the age group which includes 70 per cent. of new entrants to higher education. The average population is calculated by dividing the total population of the group by the number of years involved.

[2] Including apprenticeships, Youth Training Scheme and similar schemes.

[3] Students from abroad are excluded, as are post-graduates and others already having a higher education qualification. Excludes students studying for higher education qualifications outside the public education system other than nursing and paramedical students at DHSS establishments.

[4] Excludes private sector full-time further education and training in the United Kingdom.

[5] Includes estimates of those studying in the evening only.

[6] Includes new entrants to private colleges.

[7] Including compulsory part-time education at 16.

[8] Estimated from new entrant and enrolment data.

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the funding of *(a)* universities, *(b)* public sector higher education institutions and *(c)* further education colleges is made up of private sector payments.

Mr. Jackson: The proportion of universities' recurrent income derived from the private sector payments was estimated to be 21 per cent. in the academic year 1985-86, the latest year for which figures are available. Comparable information is not available for polytechnics and colleges under local authority control.

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of students in *(a)* university and *(b)* public sector higher education institutions, are from a manual working class background; and what were the figures in 1966 and 1976.

Mr. Jackson: Estimates based on a survey conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in "Young People's Intentions to Enter Higher Education" show that some 27 per cent. of those aged less than 21 entering polyechnics and colleges in England and Wales in 1985

were from a manual working class background, compared to 18 per cent. for universities. The proportion of older students from working class backgrounds is thought to be higher.

Information for 1962 published in the Robbins report (Cmnd. 2154) show that about one third of entrants to full-time higher education were from a manual working class background.

The percentage of acceptance to universities alone in the United Kingdom through the Universities Central Council on Admissions from a manual working class background were 24 per cent. in 1976 and 21 per cent. in 1986. Similar information is not collected by the polytechnic central admissions system.

The proportion of the population in the manual working class is estimated to have decreased more rapidly than the decrease in the proportion of entrants to higher education from the manual working class.

Student Awards

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to make adjustments to the level of student awards for students who will have to pay a community charge in the academic year 1989-90.

Mr. Jackson: Decisions on the level of student grants in future years have not yet been taken.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dead Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions was made for the disposal of dead sheep following 20 June 1986 in the areas of restriction under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Carcases of sheep that are slaughtered as part of the monitoring programme are buried by Cumbria county council under arrangements approved by the radiochemical inspectorate (now Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution). Sheep in the restricted area that die of natural or unexplained causes cannot be disposed of by farmers to knackers' yards but either have to be buried or cremated on their own land or, where this is not possible, buried by Cumbria county council under similar arrangements to those above.

Pigmeat

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if in the light of the risk to the United Kingdom's swine fever-free status, he will impose an immediate ban on the import of pigmeat.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding reply 26 November 1987]:* No. A unilateral ban on imports is not justified and would be illegal under European Community law. Trade in pigmeat is subject to detailed veterinary conditions and, following pressure from the Government, strengthened European Community rules on classical swine fever controls were adopted in September.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to undertake spot-checks for radioactivity on sheep flocks in the counties of Durham, Humberside, Northumberland, north Yorkshire, south Yorkshire and west Yorkshire.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* As a purely precautionary measure, the Ministry has carried out some monitoring for radioactivity on a small number of sheep flocks in upland-areas which experienced localised rainfall during the weekend of 3-4 May 1986. This monitoring has covered the counties of north Yorkshire, west Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland and also Devon and Somerset and that part of Cumbria which lies in the extreme south-east of the county, outside the restricted area. As a result, I am able to reassure the public in those areas that the conclusion of earlier monitoring in 1986 and 1987 that there was no risk to food supplies remains valid. The results of this monitoring will be published in due course. I have no plans at present for any further special monitoring; routine monitoring of both sheep and vegetation continues and is especially concentrated in areas known to have received deposition of radioactivity from the Chernobyl plume.

NATIONAL FINANCE

North Sea Oil

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage contribution of North sea revenues to Government receipts for each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Lilley: Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production expressed as a percentage of total general Government receipts in each year from 1976-77 have been as follows:

	Number
1976-77	0·2
1977-78	0·4
1978-79	0·9
1979-80	2·9
1980-81	4·0
1981-82	5·8
1982-83	6·4
1983-84	6·8
1984-85	8·5
1985-86	7·5
1986-87	3·0

Public Service Messages (Television)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in order to achieve wider audience coverage, he will discuss with the BBC the possibility of a greater proportion of public service messages placed by the Central Office of Information being transmitted on the corporation's television channels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Central Office of Information already has regular discussions with the BBC on the production and placement of public service messages (known as fillers) on health, safety and welfare subjects for use on BBC1 and BBC2.

We value the air time which the BBC devotes to these public service messages and will continue to seek any increase in audience cover that the corporation can achieve.

EC (Own Resources)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on how the European Commission arrived at the precise figure of 1·4 per cent. of gross national product when proposing an increase in the European Economic Community own resources.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The Commission's reasons for proposing an increase in the own resources ceiling to 1·4 per cent. of Community GNP are set out in its "Report to the Council and Parliament on the Financing of the Community Budget" (COM(87)101), which was deposited in Parliament on 27 March 1987.

Personal Searches

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many personal searches were made by Her Majesty's customs officers in 1986 at each of the Welsh ports and airports.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Waste Paper

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the value of the paper supplied by Her Majesty's Stationery Office to the Palace of Westminster; and what provision is made for recycling that part which accrues as waste.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The value of paper supplied to the Palace of Westminster for the last complete financial year (1986-87) is assessed at £710,000. Unclassified waste is collected and pulped, without charge, by a contractor who covers his costs from the sale of the waste.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Brooke: Most paper is generally supplied through Her Majesty's Stationery Office whose contracts encourage the use of recycled paper in manufacture. Waste paper other than classified waste is collected by a contractor for recycling.

Commercial Banks (Debt-Relief)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he expects the Bank of England to follow in assessing current sovereign debt problems for the purpose of assessing the tax claims of commercial banks.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* the Bank of England has no responsibility for the determination of the banks' tax liabilities. That is a matter for the Inland Revenue, applying the tax law.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Inland Revenue to complete its negotiations with the commercial banks concerning the tax relief allowable in developing country debt provisions.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* Deductions legally due for losses incurred on irrecoverable loans are established in the course of the annual determination of each bank's taxable profits when its accounts and tax computations have been submitted to the tax inspector.

Taxation

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on the retail price index of raising an extra £1,000 million in taxation from each of tobacco products, beer, wine and spirits, petrol and value added tax.

Mr. Peter Lilley: The estimated effect is as follows:

	Estimated effect on the retail price index per cent.
Raising an extra £1,000 million in a full year at 1988-89 prices in taxation from:	
Tobacco Products	0·8
Beer	0·6
Wine and Spirits	1·9
Petrol	0·4
Value Added Tax	0·5

Because of the very large changes in duty levels involved for tobacco and alcoholic drinks, the estimates for those products are subject to wide margins of error.

Thin Capitalisation

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take in the light of the recent study of thin capitalisation by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We welcome this study by the OECD of the international tax consequences which can arise from "thin capitalisation" — that is, the use of loans as a substitute for equity capital in the financing of companies for the purpose of obtaining a tax advantage. The problem for the United Kingdom manifests itself primarily in relation to subsidiaries of foreign companies, and it gives rise to growing concern.

In considering the case for any possible counteraction the wider economic and commercial implications must, however, be assessed and we are therefore inviting comments on the OECD report from interested parties. Any comments should be sent by 31 March 1988. An Inland Revenue press release issued today gives further details.

Cigarettes

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effects on import levels of cheap foreign-manufactured cigarettes of the freezing of excise duties on cigarettes announced in his 1987 Budget Statement.

Mr. Peter Lilley: It is not possible to isolate the effect of the freezing of excise duties on cigarettes in the 1987 Budget from the effect of other changes which have affected the market for cigarettes during recent months.

ENVIRONMENT

Children (Sports Teaching and Coaching)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the amount of money paid in grants to sports clubs of all kinds in each of the past five years for the purposes of teaching and coaching children in sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Sports clubs and governing bodies of sport can receive funding for facilities, equipment, training and coaching programmes, proficiency award schemes, administrative expenses and so on from a number of sources such as the Sports Council, local authorities, charitable trusts, and the private sector. Details of that funding are not kept in a form which enables the proportion of it specifically devoted to the training and teaching of children to be identified.

Sport

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Sports Council and the Central Council of Physical Recreation with a view to resolving the current differences between them.

Mr. Moynihan: The arrangements for the funding of the CCPR by the Sports Council are a matter for them, and I have no power to intervene.

I had hoped that it would be possible for the two bodies to reach agreement without arbitration and I deeply regret that this has not been possible. As a result of the initiation of arbitration proceedings, money provided by the Government for the development of sport will now be absorbed by expensive legal fees. It cannot be in the interests of the governing bodies of sport or of anyone else concerned with sport for resources to be used in this way. I hope that the legal costs will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Housing Authorities (Project Control)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the effects on the housing revenue accounts and capital programmes of housing authorities of the proposed abolition of project control.

Mrs. Roe: The abolition of project control is expected to have a neutral effect on local authorities' housing revenue accounts and capital programmes.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has undertaken any detailed appraisal of housing needs and the ability of housing authorities to continue with improvements and repair schemes following the abolition of project control; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The responsibility for assessing housing need is a matter for individual housing authorities. The abolition of project control will not affect their ability to continue with improvements and repair schemes.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the implications for the level of housing subsidy, under the proposed abolition of project control, of those authorities which agreed that former Greater London council estates outside the Greater London council boundaries be transferred to their residing authority at no cost to tenants or ratepayers.

Mrs. Roe: Authorities that have received dwellings from the Greater London council treat these dwellings in the same way as other dwellings and the abolition of project control should make no difference to their entitlement to housing subsidy.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has given to owner-occupiers who have bought property on former Greater London council estates regarding their responsibilities for improvements and repairs, in the light of the proposed abolition of project control.

Mrs. Roe: The abolition of project control will not affect owner-occupiers of former GLC dwellings.

Housing (Unit Cost Limits)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available the basis of the formula for the system of unit cost limits and how it applies *(a)* in areas with major housing problems and high land values and *(b)* in areas with fewer housing problems and where land is cheaper.

Mrs. Roe: The proposed cost figures and groups for the new system of admissible cost limits were derived from an examination of house prices and construction costs in both the private and public sectors. The sources used were Nationwide Anglia Building Society data on mortgages, the Valuation Office's property market report and data on projects carried out in 1986-87 by local authorities and housing associations. Analysis of these data places authorities in groups according to the cost of land and construction. The same formula applies for all groups throughout the system.

National Parks

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the English national parks and the parliamentary constituencies that fall within the boundaries of each park.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is as follows:

National park and parliamentary constituency

Dartmoor
- Devon West and Torridge
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Tiverton

Exmoor
- Bridgwater
- Devon North
- Taunton

Lake District
- Copeland
- Penrith and the Border
- Westmorland and Lonsdale
- Workington

Northumberland
- Berwick-upon-Tweed
- Hexham

North York Moors
- Langbaurgh
- Richmond (Yorks)

Ryedale
Scarborough

Peak District
Barnsley West and Penistone
Colne Valley
Derbyshire North-East
Derbyshire West
High Peak
Littleborough and Saddleworth
Macclesfield
Sheffield Hallam
Sheffield Hillsborough
Staffordshire Moorlands

Yorkshire Dales
Richmond (Yorks)
Skipton and Ripon
Westmorland and Lonsdale

Tyne and Wear Planning Forum

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of the papers, minutes and proceedings of meetings of the Tyne and Wear planning forum in the Library.

Mrs. Rae: A copy of the papers circulated in advance of the meeting of the Tyne and Wear planning conference on strategic guidance held on 10 November, and a copy of the summary of proceedings, will be placed in the Library. The advice to be tendered to the Secretary of State by the conference will be made public and there will be an opportunity for interested parties to comment on it.

Polychlorinated Byphenyls

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the quantities of polychlorinated biphenyls imported annually into the United Kingdom for incineration.

Mr. Moynihan: This information could not be provided without disproportionate cost since, to obtain it, it would be necessary to examine all individual consignment notes held by waste disposal authorities.

Housing

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has received from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation to his White Paper, "Housing: the Government's Proposals"; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The association has made a full response to our White Paper, commenting on its implications, as it sees them, for disabled people. Its comments, together with many others we have received, are now under careful consideration.

Members' Tea Room

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the installation of the new counter display and dispensing facilities in the Members' Tea Room.

Mr. Chope: The estimated total cost of the improvements to the Members' Tea Room is £241,000. The contract included the refurbishment of the food preparation and wash-up area and improvements to the ventilation system as well as the new servery.

Rating Reform

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each higher education institute, the estimated cost of the community charge to be borne per student *(a)* at the full rate and *(b)* with an 80 per cent. rebate.

Mr. Howard: Where a student is undertaking a course of full-time education he will be liable for 20 per cent. of the full community charge for the area of his term-time address. Tables placed in the library on 17 November show, on the basis of 1987-88 spending, what the full community charge in each area might be.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 12 November, *Official Report*, column 190, on the basis of each Salvation Army hostel in Greater London paying a collective community charge and not passing the charge to its residents, if he will estimate absolute and percentage increases in costs *(a)* per annum and *(b)* per bed that will accrue to each hostel.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept the premise on which the question is based. Each resident in a property designated for the collective community charge will be under a duty to pay a contribution to the landlord, who will be responsible for passing it on to the local authority. The collective community charge is simply a mechanism for levying community charges on people who change address frequently.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number of applications received for urban regeneration grants since introduction of the scheme, *(b)* the number of grants given, *(c)* the total amount of all grants given and *(d)* (i) shortest, (ii) longest and (iii) average time taken to process applications for grant.

Mr. Trippier: Since the introduction of urban regeneration grant over 30 schemes have been discussed with the Department, 13 of which are being appraised. A £3·25 million offer of grant was awarded on 19 October for a scheme at Round Oaks steelworks, Dudley. Detailed discussion with the developer commenced during May of this year.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the condition of 20 acres as the cartographical criterion for an urban regeneration grant.

Mr. Trippier: We shall shortly review the progress of urban regeneration grant.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* specific details of each scheme administered by his Department and directed towards inner-city renewal and urban regeneration in both public and private sectors.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the programmes operated by my Department to encourage urban regeneration and inner-city renewal are as follows:

The Urban Programme

The urban programme is a special allocation of resources to selected local authorities to support a wide

range of projects aimed at economic regeneration, improving the environment and relieving social need in urban areas. Local authorities receive grant at 75 per cent. from central Government towards the cost of approved projects which must form part of a co-ordinated inner area programme for a district.

Urban Development Grant

The urban development grant scheme is used to encourage the economic and physical regeneration of inner urban areas by attracting private sector investment projects which would not otherwise take place in such areas, which strengthen the local economy and bring land and buildings back into use. Assistance offered is the minimum necessary to make a project commercially viable. Since 1983, £127 million of UDG grants have been approved which will lever at least £526 million of private investment.

Urban Regeneration Grant

Urban regeneration grant is intended to promote the economic and physical regeneration of older urban areas affected by industrial change, by enabling the private sector to redevelop large sites and refurbish large groups of buildings. It differs from UDG as it is specifically targeted at large scale schemes and grant is paid direct to private sector owners and developers and not through local authorities. UDG and URG are not available for schemes which appear profitable and feasible without Government help.

Derelict Land Grant

Derelict land grant is designed to encourage the re-use of land which has been so damaged by former industrial or other development that it cannot be used without treatment. In assisted areas and derelict land clearance areas grants for reclamation are paid at 100 per cent. to local authorities and at 80 per cent. to private sector owners. Elsewhere, the rate is 50 per cent. for all applicants. Priority is given to schemes which will provide land for housing, industry or commerce.

Land Registers

Land registers of unused and underused land owned by public authorities are held by the Department to help prospective developers to obtain the release of particular plots. The Department has powers to direct public owners to sell land, which is registered, on the open market.

Urban Development Corporations

Urban development corporations are set up by the Government with the objective of regenerating their designated areas. They have powers to acquire, reclaim and service land, to bring land and buildings into effective use, to promote new development, and the creation of housing and social facilities. The London Docklands and Merseyside development corporations have been in operation since 1981. Four more development corporations were set up in 1987: Trafford Park, Teesside, Tyne and Wear, and the Black Country.

Enterprise Zones

As an experiment to encourage development by deregulation, 17 enterprise zones have been set up in England since 1981. These help to unlock land for industry and commerce by removing tax burdens and relaxing administrative and planning controls. The zones have led to the development of 700 hectares of land. £90 million has been spent to improve their infrastructure and unlock their potential.

Simplified Planning Zones

Under the 1986 Housing and Planning Act local planning authorities can encourage development, particularly in older urban areas, by establishing simplified planning zones. SPZs provide planning permission for a 10 year period for those types of development specified in the scheme for which there is no planning application fee.

Estate Action

Estate Action was launched in June 1985 to work with local authorities to develop innovatory solutions to the problems arising on their run-down housing estates. It encourages a wide range of approaches. These include:

(i) new ways of running estates (such as tenant management co-operatives and trusts);
(ii) measures to diversify tenure;
(iii) the involvement of private sector financial resources and skills;
(iv) estate based management initiatives which give tenants greater involvement and control (such as Priority Estate Projects and Community Refurbishment Schemes).

Housing

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the recent White Paper on housing, he will indicate the policy of the Government towards the building of houses by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy was set out in chapter 5, paragraph 5·1 of the White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals". In summary it is that local authorities should adopt a strategic approach to meeting housing needs, looking at ways in which they can encourage and assist others to provide houses, rather than building themselves.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to issue a circular to local authorities setting out his intentions on house building by such authorities following the publication of his recent White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans to issue such a circular at present.

Loft Insulation

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet received the medical advice on possible health risks to householders from the use of man-made fibres as loft insulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My earlier statement said that a summary report of an international symposium published by the World Health Organisation had indicated an increased lung cancer risk amongst workers exposed in the early days of manufacture of man-made mineral fibres (MMMF). So far as domestic exposure was concerned I said:

"on the limited data so far available, there appears to be negligible risk to the health of householders, either from existing loft insulation installations, or from laying it themselves, or from infrequent visits to their lofts".

I stated that the Government had work in hand to collect more data and to assess the risks. I also undertook to give further advice, take action as necessary and to make another announcement when further medical advice was received.

Since making my statement, the International Agency for Research on Cancer has reviewed the evidence of carcinogenicity and has classified MMMF as possibly carcinogenic to humans. The Health and Safety Executive has received advice from the DHSS Committee on carcinogenicity and has issued a news release on 24 June, which confirms the appropriateness of the current precautions on exposure to MMMF in the work place. Meanwhile, the programme of work to collect more data on the extent of domestic exposure has been completed and the results presented to the committee on carcinogenicity for their assessment of the risk to health of householders.

The committee's advice on the risk to health from MMMF loft insulation, DIY installation and subsequent disturbance in the home was:

"(i) the levels of exposure to MMMF reported for living spaces resulting from domestic loft insulation do not pose a carcinogenic risk of any practical consequence to the health of residents.
(ii) the infrequent and short-term exposures to the higher levels of MMMF associated with DIY installation or disturbance of insulation do not pose a significant additional risk.
(iii) it would be prudent nonetheless for installers to wear an appropriate mask as recommended during installation.
(iv) the overall situation should be kept under review in the light of further developments of materials and types of installation."

In view of the committee's advice, householders need not be concerned about the presence of MMMF in their lofts, about installing it themselves, or about doing DIY work in lofts insulated with MMMF. The appropriate mask recommended for installation work is one conforming to BS 6016 or BS 2091. To avoid skin irritation, householders should also use gloves when handling this material.

Wildlife Protection

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be making an announcement, following the recommendations submitted to him by the Nature Conservancy Council under section 24 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, about the protection of United Kingdom native species.

Mr. Ridley: After extensive consultation and careful consideration of the NCC's recommendations, the Government have today announced their decision to change the protected lists in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as follows:

Common name	*Scientific name*
Additions to Schedule 5 (animals)	
Anemone, Ivell's Sea	Edwardsia ivelli
Anemone, Starlet Sea	Nematoella Vectensis
Apus	Triops cancriformis
Beetle, Violet Click	Limoniacus violaceus
Cat, Wild	Felis silvestris
Cicada, New Forest	Cicadetta Montana
Crayfish, Atlantic Stream (in respect of taking under section 9(1) and in all respects under section 9(5) only)	Austropotamobius pallipes
Dolphin (all species)	Cetacea
Dormouse	Muscardinus avellanarius
Leech, Medicinal	Hirudo medicinalis
Marten, Pine	Martes martes
Mat, Trembling Sea	Victorella pavida

Common name	*Scientific name*
Moth, Vipers Bugloss	Hadena irregularis
Porpoise (all species)	Cetacea
Sandworn, Lagoon	Armandia cirrhosa
Shrimp, Fairy	Chirocephalus diaphanus
Shrimp, Lagoon Sand	Gammarus insensibilis
Turtles, Marine (all species)	Dermochelyidea and Cheloniidae
Vendace	Coregonus albula
Walrus	Odebenus rosmarus
Whale (all species)	Cetacea
Whitefish	Coregonus lavaretus
Adders-tongue, Least	Ophioglossum lusitanicum
Cabbage, Lundy	Rhynchosinapis wrightii
Colt's-foot, Purple	Homogyne alpina
Cottongrass, Slender	Eriophorum gracile
Crocus, Sand	Romulea columnae
Cudweed, Red-tipped	Filago lutescens
Fleabane, Alpine	Erigeron borealis
Fleabane, Small	Pulicaria vulgaris
Gentian, Fringed	Gentiana ciliata
Germander, Cut-leaved	Teucrium botrys
Goosefoot, Stinking	Chenopodium vulvaria
Grass-poly	Lythrum hyssopifolia
Hawk's-beard, Stinking	Crepis foetida
Helleborine, Young's	Epipactis youngiana
Horsetail, Branched	Equisetum ramosissimum
Hound's-tongue, Green	Cynoglossum germanicum
Marshwort, Creeping	Apium repens
Milk-parsley, Cambridge	Selinum carvifolia
Naiad, Holly-leaved	Najas marina
Pennyroyal	Mentha pulegium
Pigmyweed	Crassula aquatica
Ragwort, Fen	Senecio paludosus
Ramping-fumitory, Martin's	Fumaria martinii
Restharrow, Small	Ononis reclinata
Rock-cress, Alpine	Arabis Alpina
Rock-cress, Bristol	Arabis stricta
Speedwell, Fingered	Veronica triphyllos
Star-of-Bethlehem, Early	Gagea bohemica
Stonewort	Lamprothamnium papulosum
Strapwort	Corrigiola litoralis
Viper's-grass	Scorzonera humilis
Further but still only partial protection of Schedule 5 has been afforded to:	
Lizard, vivaporous	Lacerta vivipara
Slow-worm	Anguis fragilis
Snake, grass	Natrix helvetical (natrix natrix)
Deletions from Schedule 5	
Snail, carthusian	Monacha cartisiana
Butterfly, chequered skipper	Carterocephalus palaemon

Waste Recycling

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement Her Majesty's Government are giving to recycling of waste; and whether, in the interests of conservation and the reduction of litter, he will consider means to ensure that bottles, tins and so on, are returnable on cash deposit.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The Government are currently taking four main initiatives to encourage the economic recycling of waste:—

1. By promoting greater awareness of the potential of waste as a resource through, for example, a video directed at industry and an education pack for schools;

2. By holding sectoral conferences with all the interested parties to explore the prospects for increasing the economic recycling of specific waste materials; a conference on glass recycling in July 1986 resulted in a commitment to double the number of bottle bank sites within five years;

3. By setting up the recycling advisory unit at the Warren Spring laboratory in July 1985; and

4. By supporting the work of voluntary organisations, for example, the Waste Watch project of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

This encouragement does not extend to the imposition of mandatory deposits. The Government prefer to leave it to the market to decide whether goods should be packed in returnable or non-returnable containers and whether a deposit should be charged. There would be practical problems in introducing deposits on many forms of packaging.

Raptors (Licences)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer of 23 November, if he will now provide a complete list of the numbers of licences granted for the taking of birds of prey from the wild and the numbers of birds of prey taken under such licences, by species in each case, for each of the last five years and the current year to date.

Mr. Moynihan: *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Following are the number of licences issued since 1982 permitting birds of prey to be taken from the wild in England and Wales, and in Scotland, and the number of birds so taken.

	[1]1982		[1]1983		1984		1985		1986		1987	
	Licences issued	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*	*Licences issued*	*Birds taken*
Common Buzzard												
England and Wales	—	—	13	—	9	6	19	11	13	9	13	12
Scotland	9	4	4	3	9	8	2	1	9	6	7	5
Kestral												
England and Wales	—	—	9	—	4	2	5	5	0	0	0	0
Scotland	4	1	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merlin												
England and Wales	—	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	4	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peregrine												
England and Wales	—	—	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	0
Scotland	2	2	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	8	6
Sparrowhawk												
England and Wales	—	—	24	—	44	21	36	29	44	38	40	34
Scotland	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	1	1	1	6	5

No Licences were issued in these years permitting golden eagle or goshawk to be taken from the wild.
[1] Details for England and Wales are not available in all cases.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on financial contracts entered into by Nirex in connection with (i) geological surveys of potential nuclear waste deep disposal facilities and (ii) the technology required to assess the suitability of sites for nuclear waste deep disposal facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend has no information about Nirex's financial contracts. This is entirely a matter for UK Nirex Ltd.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what duty the proposed National Rivers Authority will have to consult sea fisheries committees so far as pollution is concerned.

Mr. Moynihan: Currently, a sea fisheries committee is consulted by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when, in accordance with the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act, he is notified by a water authority of an application for consent to discharge effluent which might bear on the interests of that committee. The only change which will result from the creation of the National Rivers Authority is that the NRA instead of the water authorities will notify the Minister, who will then, as now, consult the committees affected.

Sewage Works

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those water authorities operating sewage works which contravene the requirments of the Control of Pollution Act.

Mr. Moynihan: All water authorities have some sewage treatment works which failed their discharge consent conditions at some time in 1986, according to reports submitted to the Department earlier this year. A major programme of investment to upgrade and renew old treatment works is under way. However, the detailed reasons for non compliance are being investigated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and when it has completed its investigations, we shall want to discuss with the water industry what further measures are necessary to achieve early compliance.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Haemophiliacs

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make it his policy to provide a non-means tested special weekly benefit for people with haemophilia and HIV;

(2) what provision his Department makes for people with haemophilia and HIV who need a special diet to protect their immune systems;

(3) what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the extent to which people with haemophilia and HIV need extra heating;

(4) if he will list the latest measures taken to take care of people with haemophilia and HIV;

(5) what assessment he has made of the burden placed upon the finances of people with haemophilia infected by HIV as a result of treatment through the National Health Service;

(6) if he will consider setting up an insurance scheme to allow people with haemophilia and HIV to obtain mortgage endowment schemes in order to protect the home on death of the family breadwinner from AIDS;

(7) what action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government to protect widows and dependent relations on the death of a person with haemophilia with AIDS;

(8) if he will make it his policy to pay a lump sum to all those infected with HIV from blood products.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my statement to the House on 16 November at column 773 in which I announced a grant of £10 million to the Haemophilia Society.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the average social economic status of people with haemophilia.

Mr. Newton: None.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice Her Majesty's Government give to people with haemophilia and HIV on their diet.

Mr. Newton: Specific advice to haemophiliacs with HIV on diet and other aspects of their health care is a matter for the doctors responsible for their treatment.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what detailed studies his Department has made of the effects of HIV on haemophiliac families and the effect the infection will have on the community at large.

Mr. Newton: While no specific study has been undertaken, we are aware, through haemophilia directors, other health care professionals, and the representations of the Haemophilia Society, of the many difficulties HIV infection can cause for haemophiliacs and their families. There is no reason however to expect consequential effects for the community at large, since HIV is not transmitted through normal social contacts.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what difference there is as regards area health care between *(a)* people with haemophilia and HIV and *(b)* other people with HIV.

Mr. Newton: In addition to the facilities of the National Health Service which are available to all patients with HIV, special health care for haemophiliacs is provided through a network of haemophilia centres. Specialist HIV counselling facilities for haemophiliacs and their families are available at haemophilia reference centres.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the propensity of *(a)* people with haemophilia and HIV and *(b)* people with HIV to develop AIDS.

Mr. Newton: Concerning *(a)* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 16 November at columns *435-36*. In our planning for the future care needs of people infected with HIV, the current estimate is that, in general, 30 per cent. of those who are HIV antibody positive will go on to develop AIDS within five years.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people there are under 16 years with haemophilia and HIV.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will allocate more money to regional haemophilia reference centres for the care of people with haemophilia and HIV.

Mr. Newton: We shall be deciding the precise amounts to be made available for 1988-89 as soon as possible.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he expects to receive an application from the Haemophilia Society for additional resources to staff the running of the new trust fund for haemophiliacs infected from factor VIII products;

(2) whether it is his intention that the letter of intent establishing the trust fund for haemophiliacs infected from factor VIII products will insist that the Haemophilia Society will have to use all its revenue and capital to help only the 1,200 individuals and their immediate families.

Mr. Newton: It is our intention that the trust fund (both capital and revenue) will be used solely to help affected haemophiliacs and their dependants. The Department is working closely with the Haemophilia Society to assess the full implications for it of administering the new £10 million trust fund, and to determine how best to ensure that the necessary help and advice is available.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to complete his further consideration of proposals for disregarding tax and social security purposes any payments made by the Haemophilia Society from the trust fund set up from Government funds.

Mr. Newton: As soon as possible.

Blood Products

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate pharmaceutical companies from whom infected blood products have been purchased.

Mr. Newton: All manufacturers of licensed medicinal products, including blood products, which are intended for use in the United Kingdom are already subject to regular inspections. This control is exercised by the Department's medicines inspectorate which follows a programme of inspections to confirm that the standards of good pharmaceutical manufacturing practice are observed. In the event of an incident which casts doubt upon the safety of a medicinal product, the licensing authority would investigate and, if necessary, take appropriate regulatory action which might include the suspension, revocation or variation of the licence.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when Her Majesty's Government took action on all the evidence available to them to ensure the quality of blood products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Commercial blood products are licensed by the United Kingdom Medicines Licensing Authority only after careful consideration of quality, safety and efficacy. Requirements of the licensing authority have been updated as necessary in line with advances in medical knowledge. For example, all licensed factor VIII released for use in the United Kingdom from early 1985 has been heat treated to inactivate HIV and from the end of 1985 has been made from individually screened donations.

Haemophilia Society

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last provided funding for the Haemophilia Society under section 64 of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Newton: The Haemophilia Society received a grant under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 in the financial year 1986-87. It has not applied for a further grant.

Glaucoma

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the total number of sufferers of the eye disease glaucoma who have come to the attention of his Department, *(b)* the total cost to his Department of treating this condition and *(c)* the cost per patient of the eye test which would indicate the possibility of glaucoma, for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, an estimated 13,440 patients were discharged from National Health Service hospitals in England with a main diagnosis of glaucoma. Figures on costs of treatment for glaucoma are not available centrally. The cost of that part of an eye test which would indicate the possibility of glaucoma is not identified separately. Most cases are diagnosed by consultant ophthalmologists who are responsible for treatment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take to improve the rate of early diagnosis of glaucoma; and if he has any plans to encourage wider use of available tests, including inspection of the fundus of the eye and tonometry, especially to high-risk groups.

Mrs. Currie: It is for general medical practitioners to refer patients identified as being at high risk to a consultant ophthalmologist. Diagnosis and resultant treatment are the responsibility of consultant ophthalmologists and this may require a number of specialised tests, not all of which ophthalmic opticians are qualified or trained to carry out. At present the interior of patients' eyes is routinely examined with an ophthalmascope as part of the National Health Service sight test. This process is known as fundoscopy. Practitioners may undertake tonometry if they consider this appropriate but there is no requirement to do so.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the top and bottom levels of annual salaries of *(a)* a ward sister, *(b)* a state registered nurse, *(c)* a state enrolled nurse and *(d)* a midwife, showing (i) basic salary and (ii) average salary with overtime in each case.

Mr. Newton: The following table shows the current basic salary scales for these grades and the estimated average earnings of full time staff for working unsocial hours and overtime etc.

Grade	*Basic Payscale*		*Estimated equivalent earnings rounded to nearest £50 (excluding London Weighting)*	
	Minimum £ per annum	*Maximum £ per annum*	*Minimum £ per annum*	*Maximum £ per annum*
Ward Sister (Nursing Sister II)	9,000	12,000	10,250	13,650
Staff Nurse (RGN)	7,300	8,600	8,550	10,050
Enrolled Nurse (EN)	6,250	7,750	7,400	9,150
Midwifery Sister	9,000	12,000	10,300	13,750
Staff Midwife	7,300	8,600	8,350	9,850

Note: In addition to this nurses in Greater London receive London Weighting of £930 per annum.

Organ Transplantation

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what part his Department played in the recent conference of European Health Ministers in Paris when organ transplantation was considered; whether the United Kingdom delegation subscribed to the final resolution adopted by the Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I took part in the conference of European Health Ministers in Paris in early November. We now have the largest number of people with a functioning transplanted organ of any European country. The provisional figures at the end of 1986 showed a total of over 7,000. Moreover we had legislation (the Human Tissue Act 1961) much earlier than most other countries, and I shared our experience with other delegates.

The conference provided an opportunity for an exchange of views on ethical, legislative, educational and organisational matters connected with organ transplantation. The conference also explored the possibility of increasing European co-operation in this field. I on behalf of the United Kingdom subscribed to the content of the final communiqué which set out Ministers' views on guidelines for future work in the field of organ transplants and made recommendations to the Council of Europe on the steps which might be taken to follow up the conference. A copy of the communiqué has been placed in the Library.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the work of medical laboratory scientific officers with regard to preventive health programmes and the battle against AIDS.

Mr. Newton: The laboratory work of medical laboratory scientific officers contributes to preventive health programmes such as rubella screening, cervical

screening and the early detection of inborn errors of metabolism. Medical laboratory scientific officers, along with their colleagues, contribute to the battle against AIDS via their work on the diagnosis of HIV infection and its associated complications. They also have a role within the national blood transfusion services in the routine testing of over 2 million blood donations each year for evidence of HIV and other infections.

Hospital Beds (York)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, what was the number of bed spaces available for the recovering mentally ill in the York area for each year since 1982; what were occupancy figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of York district health authority for more detailed information. The available information held centrally is given in the table.

Number of available staffed beds and resident patients in NHS mental illness hospitals and units in York district health authority at 31 December 1982-86

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Available staffed beds	1,153	1,076	971	910	850
All resident patients	987	901	850	792	738
Percentage occupancy	86	84	88	87	87

Haringey Health Authority

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he used in appointing the current chairman of the Haringey health authority.

Mrs. Currie: It would not be proper for me to comment on an individual appointment. However in making appointments of district health authority chairmen generally we take into account a wide variety of factors, including the candidates' personal qualities, their interest in and commitment to the National Health Service and their management or other relevant experience.

Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide an estimate of *(a)* the numbers of claimants benefiting from transitional protection in April 1988, *(b)* the numbers of claimants expected to lose that protection by April 1989 by benefit upratings, assuming benefit upratings in line with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's inflation estimates in the Autumn Statement and *(c)* the numbers of claimants expected to lose protection by April 1989 by the loss of entitlement to income support, assuming the unemployment projection given in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Scott: Estimates of the figures requested are as follows:

(a) 1·4 million
(b) 0·6 million
(c) 0·3 million.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the annual flow of claimants on to, and off, supplementary benefit for each year since 1983, for the United Kingdom, for each standard within the United Kingdom and for each benefit office in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available in the form requested. Details are shown of the number of successful new and repeat supplementary benefit claims made and of the number of cases in action in Great Britain as a whole, for each social security region and for the three local social security offices in Newcastle, for the years requested. No information is available concerning the number of claimants who cease to receive supplementary benefit.

New and repeat claims

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
National	4,116,685	4,074,934	3,956,950	3,733,731
North East Region	612,368	604,746	603,065	580,237
Midlands Region	631,200	611,099	588,114	565,755
London North Region	676,713	679,626	659,079	602,430
London South Region	639,616	636,502	600,055	538,735
Wales and South West Region	524,325	528,435	527,236	502,033
North West Region	575,869	556,530	537,343	512,718
Scotland	456,594	457,996	442,058	431,823
Local Offices:				
Newcastle East	11,870	11,839	12,499	11,836
Newcastle West	7,065	6,932	7,238	7,270
Newcastle St. James	11,949	13,158	12,774	10,691

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Liveload Data

	10 May 1983	*9 May 1984*	*8 May 1985*	*7 May 1986*	*6 May 1987*
National	4,474,489	4,746,831	4,985,341	5,062,309	5,105,599
North East Region	710,426	756,721	791,634	804,045	800,969
Midlands Region	753,167	799,236	832,021	833,646	838,355
London North Region	714,749	750,243	791,360	803,042	801,001
London South Region	621,877	658,797	696,477	710,286	723,419
Wales and South West Region	557,881	589,535	623,320	633,096	632,332

	10 May 1983	9 May 1984	8 May 1985	7 May 1986	6 May 1987
North West Region	672,488	712,666	745,329	756,254	760,438
Scotland	443,901	479,633	505,200	521,940	549,085
Local Offices—					
Newcastle East	15,290	15,493	16,398	17,470	16,582
Newcastle West	10,359	10,252	11,164	11,689	11,951
Newcastle St. James	14,174	15,965	17,050	17,560	18,237

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

The count of cases in action includes cases where benefit has ceased but other action is continuing. Data for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants at the latest available date had claimed benefit continuously *(a)* for five years but less than 10 years and *(b)* for 10 years or more.

Mr. Portillo: At February 1986, 1,561,000 claimants had been in receipt of supplementary benefit for five years or more. No information is available about how many of these claimants had been in receipt of benefit for 10 years or more.
Source: Annual statistical inquiry.

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions have been issued to local offices of his Department following the decision of the social security commissioner that ex gratia payments made by British Shipbuilders did not disqualify recipients from receiving unemployment benefit, Commissioner's file number CU/364/1985.

Mr. Portillo: The chief adjudication officer issued guidance to local offices in July 1987 in circular S25/87, a copy of which is in the Library.

West Midlands (NHS Budget)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of increases in the National Health Service budget announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for 1988-89 and 1989-90 in his Autumn Statement, will go to the west midlands region.

Mrs. Currie: Health authority allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly: those for 1989-90 will be announced towards the end of next year. The west midlands regional health authority this year has taken 10·5 per cent. of the total allocated budget.

Departmental Research

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received about the recent introduction of a requirement that the results of research sponsored by his Department may be published only with his consent; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria he intends to apply when considering applications to publish in learned journals the findings of research sponsored by his Department where that research reaches conclusions critical of his policy; and in what circumstances permission to publish may be refused.

(3) if he will state the reasons why he has changed the form of his Department's contracts for research work.

Mrs. Currie: A review last year of the Department's standard conditions for research contracts showed that their wording was not fully consistent with the responsibilities for Crown Copyright delegated to it by the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, and conferred inadequate control over the publication of material resulting from research commissioned by the Department even in cases where legal advice might be against it. The wording was therefore revised accordingly.

The Department has received a number of representations from members of the research community who fear that the change could lead to the publication of research results being restricted for other reasons. The revised wording however requires that consent to publish shall not be withheld unreasonably, and we expect to give it as readily as in the past.

AIDS

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what progress he has made towards making an order adding to the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 a requirement relating to HIV statistics at district levels;

(2) when he expects the first reports under the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 to be published; and what period they will cover;

(3) what consultations he has had with regards to the implementation of the AIDS (Control) Act 1987; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have sent consultation letters to the joint consultants committee, the community medicine consultative committee, regional general managers and regional medical officers about the proposed guidance for health authorities on the completion of the reports required under the AIDS (Control) Act. We hope to lay an amending order relating to HIV statistics before Parliament in January 1988. It is proposed that the first reports will cover the period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988. Authorities will be required to publish these reports by 31 July 1988.

Community Care

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what increases in funding for area health authorities have been provided in each year since 1979 for community care for the mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The development of services to patients are funded by health authorities from within the total resources available to them. Community care policies have benefited especially from the availability of joint finance, which is provided specifically to encourage joint planning and collaboration between health and local authorities. Joint finance allocations have increased by over 60 per

cent. in real terms since 1978-79. It is estimated that just over 30 per cent. of joint finance has been spent on services for mentally handicapped people.

Total annual provision of joint finance is shown in the table.

Year	Allocation £ million
1978-79	34·5
1979-80	41·5
1980-81	61·0
1981-82	75·3
1982-83	84·7
1983-84	94·1
1984-85	98·9
1985-86	106·1
1986-87	109·9
1987-88	110·9

Dental Care

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the annual cost in the financial year 1986-87 for the provision of free dental inspections; and what is the projected cost for the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Newton: The cost of free dental examinations in England in 1986-87 was £97·4 million. The projected cost for 1987-88 is £105 million.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in each of the last five years, what was the annual number of free dental inspections carried out.

Mr. Newton: Information is available up to 1985 by calendar year, and by financial year from 1986-87.

England

Year	Number (thousands)
1986-87	29,043
1985	28,624
1984	28,325
1983	27,913
1982	27,451

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the £170 million which he seeks to raise in increased charges from the dental and ophthalmic services will fall upon the general dental service in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: It is expected that approximately half will come from the proposed changes in dental charges.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of recipients of attendance allowance at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Scott: At 31 March 1986, the latest date for which information is available, an estimated 585,000 people were receiving attendance allowance.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make a further statement about the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: I cannot yet add to the replies given to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 4 November and 12 November at columns *783* and *170* respectively.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of (*a*) the amount recovered and (*b*) the amount illegally claimed but not recovered from social security claimants prosecuted since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: This information requested is not available.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of full-time equivalent posts dedicated solely or mainly to detection of social security fraud.

Mr. Portillo: Precise figures are not available but it is possible to calculate the amount of staff time expended within the Department on the detection of social security fraud. In October 1987 the equivalent of 2,798 full-time staff were employed on social security fraud work.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy with respect to the prosecution of social security claimants.

Mr. Portillo: In reaching a decision whether to prosecute each case is considered individually and various factors are taken into account. These include the nature of the offence, the social, domestic and medical circumstances of the claimant and the amount of overpayment involved.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take in the light of recent evidence concerning alleged evasions of the official controls on the registration and management of homes for the mentally ill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Under the Registered Homes Act 1984 all homes providing residential care for four or more mentally ill people must be registered with the local authority, which can refuse registration if it is not satisfied with the standard of care. Homes, hotels, and so on, not offering care are not registered, but persons living in such homes who are in need of various types of care should be able to obtain it from health and social service authorities.

The social service inspectorate has just completed a two-year study of the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984 for residential care homes; its report is due shortly. We shall be reviewing the registration system in the light of that report and in doing so will be taking into account the report of Lady Wagner's committee on the role of residential care—due early in 1988—and of Sir Roy Griffiths' on community care—also due early next year.

Private Health Care

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many operations on National Health Service patients in the west midlands will be done in private hospitals as a result of £240,000 being paid to a

private health insurance company by the West Midlands regional health authority; what sort of operations will be done; who will choose the patients to be given these operations; and how they will be chosen.

Mr. Newton: The allocation to West Midlands regional health authority from the £25 million national waiting list fund for 1987-88 has been increased from £2·88 million to £3·12 million. This will enable the region to arrange for the treatment of additional waiting list cases, particularly through the cost-effective use of private sector hospitals. The role of the private insurance company in this imaginative project is to act as advisers to the health authorities on the options available to them from the private sector, negotiating as necessary on their behalf. The regional and district health authorities, on the advice of the doctors concerned, will then select which groups of waiting list patients are to benefit. A similar project is under way in Trent regional health authority. These projects are still at an early stage but will be closely monitored to determine the effectiveness of this approach to improving waiting time for National Health Service patients.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average financial loss to students last academic year from the implementation of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Portillo: The average financial effect on students during the 1986-87 academic year of those parts of the Social Security Act 1986 so far implemented cannot be identified but it is thought to be negligible. The new income-related schemes introduced by the Act come into effect in April 1988.

Benefit Claimants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list, following the introduction of the provision for women to be nominated as head of household in the payment of social security benefits, the number of households which have taken up this option in relation to the total number of claimants.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The most recent available information indicates that about 2 per cent. of supplementary benefit claimants with partners are women and that a similar percentage of married women claimants to benefits under the Social Security Act 1975 are receiving a dependency addition.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of gross income entitlement to housing benefit will cease, assuming that family credit is claimed and that average rent and rates are paid, after the Social Security Act 1986 is implemented in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* On the basis of illustrative assumptions about the level of rents, rates and tax allowances next year, a married man with two children aged 9 and 12 will lose entitlement to housing benefit when his total gross income reaches £134·76.

Notes:
1. The example assumes child benefit of £14·50 and family credit of £29·26 is in payment.
2. The rent is assumed to be £19·12 per week and the rates £8·02.
3. The married man's tax allowance is assumed to be £3,925 per annum and the basic rate of tax is assumed to be unchanged at 27 per cent.

DEFENCE

Missile Defence Systems

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any feasibility studies of missile defence systems deployed to protect civil nuclear facilities in war.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* It is not our practice to discuss details of deployment plans in war.

Disarmament

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any of his staff were present at the sixth European nuclear disarmament convention held in Coventry on 15 to 18 July.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* I am not aware that any member of the staff of the Ministry of Defence attended this convention.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any assessment of the implications of a sea- or ground-launched cruise missile fired from United Kingdom territory failing to reach its programmed target and exploding in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* No. There is no question of a nuclear explosion occurring as a result of a cruise missile launched in the United Kingdom failing in flight over United Kingdom territory.

Brecon Beacons (Military Exercises)

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to restrict military personnel based at the Cwm Gwdi camp in the Brecon Beacons from engaging in exercises which will disturb local residents prior to 7.30 am.

Mr. Freeman: Cwm Gwdi camp provides an essential training service for the armed forces; activities include night marching, endurance training, and because of the nature of these activities there can be no restrictions on times of operation. However, no live or simulated firing or manoeuvring of tracked vehicles is involved, and disturbance to others is kept to an absolute minimum.

Armilla Patrol

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of maintaining the Armilla patrol for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 5 November 1987 at column *888*.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the vessels on the Armilla patrol are equipped with the Goalkeeper and Phalanx systems.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on 10 November 1987 at column 153. It would not be in the interests of the safety of the fleet to define the specific capabilities of individual ships.

Submarines

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is prepared to discuss the limitation of Royal Navy submarine operations in the Barents and North Norwegian sea in return for limitation on Soviet submarine operations in the Eastern Atlantic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Limitations on submarine operations would not only pose great problems of verification but would also be likely to be detrimental to the West's security interests in view of our greater dependence on the sea for defence and reinforcement purposes. NATO's arms control priorities, which it is pursuing vigorously, were set out by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 18 November 1987 at column *588*.

Military Balance

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when North Atlantic Treaty Organisation last published an assessment of the military balance.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The last such assessment, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, was published in 1984.

FI-111 Aircraft

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many FI-111 aircraft are currently based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The number of United States Air force FI-111 aircraft assigned to NATO and based in Europe, all of which are based in the United Kingdom, is published each year in the Statement on the Defence Estimates. For the most recent statement, I refer the right hon. Member to figure 15 on page 67 of Cmnd. 101-I.

Boeing (Contracts)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the current value of contracts placed by Boeing in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Boeing company has recently submitted its first six-monthly report under the AWACS offset programme, which claims credit for contracts placed with United Kingdom companies to the value of $141 million since November 1986. The report is currently being evaluated and it is therefore too early to say how much of the claim will be agreed as counting towards the fulfilment of Boeing's offset commitment.

Northern Waters (Maritime Activity)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his Norwegian counterpart concerning Mr. Gorbachev's proposals to limit maritime activity in northern waters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We maintain regular consultation on a confidential basis with all our NATO allies, both bilaterally and in NATO fora, concerning a range of arms control matters.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will invite representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America to monitor any future British nuclear tests at the Nevada test site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: United Kingdom tests at the Nevada test site are already carried out in co-operation with the United States. Invitations to third parties would not be a matter for the United Kingdom alone.

Doctors and Dentists (Pay)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards maintaining parity of pay levels between doctors and dentists in the armed forces; and what salaries are currently in force.

Mr. Freeman: Pay for both medical and dental officers in the armed forces is set by the Government on the recommendations of the independent Review Body on Armed Forces pay. The review body's approach has been to base its recommendations for both groups on the career earnings of general medical practitioners in the National Health Service. Details of the methodology and of current pay rates are given in the supplement of the review body's sixteenth report 1987 (Cm. 176).

As discussed in paragraphs 4 to 7, the Ministry of Defence is developing some proposals for restructuring the pay of these groups with the aim of improving the retention of experienced people; these will be submitted to the review body for consideration during the 1988 pay review. However, they do not suggest any alteration to the parity of basic pay between service doctors and dentists.

Howitzers

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many howitzers currently in service with the Army will be replaced by the new 155 mm self-propelled howitzer.

Mr. Sainsbury: The competition for the 155 mm self-propelled howitzer remains in progress. No decision has yet been taken.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the next generation of self-propelled howitzers will be nuclear capable; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether all types of self-propelled howitzers currently being assessed are able to fire all types of NATO issued 155 mm nuclear shells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: All the contenders in the self-propelled howitzer competition should be compatible with a wide range of 155 mm artillery rounds in use in NATO, both conventional and nuclear.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what date the next generation of self-propelled howitzers will be in service with the Army.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is envisaged that the winner of the current competition for a 155 mm self-propelled howitzer for the Army will enter service before the mid-1990s.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the contract for the self-propelled 70 turret was awarded to Vickers Defence Systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Work on the turret for the SP70 propelled howitzer programme which was allocated to the United Kingdom, was placed with Royal Ordnance, in accordance with the industrial work sharing arrangements which were agreed between the participating nations.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to order 155 mm self-propelled howitzers for the Army.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our current intention is to reach a decision on the 155 mm SP howitzer competition in the spring of next year.

Arms Control Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the arms control unit in his Department.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 4 June 1985 at column 138.

House Purchase

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if potential purchasers of his Department's housing are notified before they buy of the potential implications for compensation for latent damage under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Potential purchasers of defective house types are notified before they buy of the legal position with regard to latent defects. Their attention is specifically drawn to the defects likely to be encountered, and this is reflected in prices.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Facsimile Machines

Mr. Wray: To ask the Leader of the House how many facsimile machines there are in the Houses of Parliament; where are they located; and who is authorised to use them.

Mr. Wakeham: There is one facsimile machine in the Central Lobby Post Office which is available for use by hon. Members on a repayment basis. There are, in addition, several machines which have been purchased by hon. Members for their own private use and others reserved for official use by certain Departments and offices.

Members (Bribery)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will introduce legislation to make the bribery of a Member of Parliament a separately identifiable criminal offence, in line with the recommendation of the Salmond report on standards of conduct in public life; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No, I believe the present remedies are sufficient. Bribery of a Member of Parliament not acting in his capacity as a Member would be caught by the criminal law. The House itself has remedies available to it in the event of bribery of a Member of Parliament acting as such.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 December 1987

WALES

Trade Visit (Japan)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about his recent trade visit to Japan.

Mr. Peter Walker: My visit to Japan last week was primarily an inward investment mission. I was much encouraged by the clear interest Japanese industry is showing in further significant investments in the United Kingdom over the coming years.

I had the honour of addressing the Japan-British Society in the presence of His Imperial Highness Prince Tomohito of Mikasa. I had very useful discussions with Mr. Sosuke Uno, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yasuoki Urano, Parliamentary Vice Minister for International Trade and Industry, and representatives of the Keidanren.

I spoke at two seminars at Nagoya and Osaka which had been arranged by the Invest in Britain Bureau of the Department of Trade and Industry. These were prestigious engagements attended by many senior Japanese business people in those areas.

As this was my first visit to Japan in my present capacity, I visited a number of companies which have already established factories in Wales to make contact with them and to discuss their plans for the future of their Welsh operations. I also met senior representatives of a number of companies which are considering establishing operations in the United Kingdom. Two projects—Star Micronics and a joint venture by Onamba and Sumitomo—were announced whilst I was in Japan; between them they should bring a further 470 jobs to Wales. I attended a ceremony involving an exchange of trees in connection with the national garden festival at Ebbw Vale in 1992.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department received the annotated copy of the memorandum concerning the National Museum of Wales, prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General and submitted to the Public Accounts Committee on 19 January; and what action was taken to investigate the criticisms of that memorandum by the author of the annotations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The annotated copy of the document was sent to the Department for information and was received on 23 February 1987. It is for the Comptroller and Auditor General to consider what to do about comments on a document he has issued.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Prime Minister what further guidance is being given to civil servants about their duties and responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: In the light of comments made by the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, the Defence Committee and the Civil Service unions, the Head of the Home Civil Service has revised the note of guidance on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers which he issued in February 1985. With my consent, he has issued the revised note today. A copy is annexed to this answer.

Note is as follows—

THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN RELATION TO MINISTERS

Note by the Head of the Home Civil Service

In February 1985, with the consent of the Prime Minister, I issued a note of guidance restating the general duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers. That note was reproduced in a Written Answer by the Prime Minister to a Parliamentary Question on 26 February 1985 (OR 26 February 1985, columns *130* to *132*). In the light of the subsequent discussion, including observations of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Defence Committee of the House of Commons and comments from the Council of Civil Service Unions, I have expanded the note of guidance, and a revised version is now issued. As previously, the note is issued after consultation with Permanent Secretaries in charge of Departments and with their agreement. As with the earlier version, this revised version is issued with the consent of the Prime Minister, and will be reported by her to the House of Commons.

2. This note is concerned with the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers. It should be read in the wider context of Ministers' own responsibilities, which were set out in the Government's reply to the Seventh Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (Cmnd. 9841):

> "The Government believes that Ministers are well aware of the principles that should govern their duties and responsibilities in relation to Parliament and in relation to civil servants. It goes without saying that these include the obligations of integrity. They include the duty to give Parliament and the public as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions of the Government, and not to deceive or mislead Parliament or the public. In relation to civil servants, they include the duty to give fair consideration and due weight to informed and impartial advice from civil servants, as well as to other considerations and advice, in reaching policy decisions; the duty to refrain from asking or instructing civil servants to do things which they should not do; the duty to ensure that influence over appointments is not abused for partisan purposes; and the duty to observe the obligations of a good employer with regard to terms and conditions of service and the treatment of those who serve them."

3. Civil servants are servants of the Crown. For all practical purposes the Crown in this context means and is represented by the Government of the day. There are special cases in which certain functions are conferred by law upon particular members or groups of members of the public service; but in general the executive powers of the Crown are exercised by and on the advice of Her Majesty's Ministers, who are in turn answerable to Parliament. The Civil Service as such has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly constituted Government of the day. It is there to provide the Government of the day with advice on the formulation of the policies of the Government, to assist in carrying out the decisions of the Government, and to manage and deliver the services for which the Government is responsible. Some civil servants are also involved, as a proper part of their duties, in the processes of presentation of Government policies and decisions.

4. The Civil Service serves the Government of the day as a whole, that is to say Her Majesty's Ministers collectively, and the Prime Minister is the Minister for the Civil Service. The duty of the individual civil servant is first and foremost to the Minister of the Crown who is in charge of the Department in which he or she is serving. The basic principles of accountability of Ministers and civil servants are as set out in the Government's response (Cmnd 9916) to the Defence Committee's Fourth Report of 1985-86:

—Each Minister is responsible to Parliament for the conduct of his Department, and for the actions carried out by his Department in pursuit of Government policies or in the discharge of responsibilities laid upon him as a Minister.

—A Minister is accountable to Parliament, in the sense that he has a duty to explain in Parliament the exercise of his powers and duties and to give an account to Parliament of what is done by him in his capacity as a Minister or by his Department.

—Civil servants are responsible to their Ministers for their actions and conduct.

5. It is the duty of civil servants to serve their Ministers with integrity and to the best of their ability. In their dealings with the public, civil servants should always bear in mind that people have a right to expect that their affairs will be dealt with sympathetically, efficiently and promptly.

6. The British Civil Service is a non-political and professional career service subject to a code of rules and disciplines. Civil servants are required to serve the duly constituted Government of the day, of whatever political complexion. It is of the first importance that civil servants should conduct themselves in such a way as to deserve and retain the confidence of Ministers, and to be able to establish the same relationship with those whom they may be required to serve in some future Administration. That confidence is the indispensable foundation of a good relationship between Ministers and civil servants. The conduct of civil servants should at all times be such that Ministers and potential future Ministers can be sure that that confidence can be freely given, and that the Civil Service will at all times conscientiously fulfil its duties and obligations to, and impartially assist, advise and carry out the policies of, the duly constituted Government of the day.

7. The determination of policy is the responsibility of the Minister (within the convention of collective responsibility of the whole Government for the decisions and actions of every member of it). In the determination of policy the civil servant has no constitutional responsibility or role distinct from that of the Minister. Subject to the conventions limiting the access of Ministers to papers of previous Administrations, it is the duty of the civil servant to make available to the Minister all the information and experience at his or her disposal which may have a bearing on the policy decisions to which the Minister is committed or which he is preparing to make, and to give to the Minister honest and impartial advice, without fear or favour, and whether the advice accords with the Minister's view or not. Civil servants are in breach of their duty, and damage their integrity as servants of the Crown, if they deliberately withhold relevant information from their Minister, or if they give their Minister other advice than the best they believe they can give, or if they seek to obstruct or delay a decision simply because they do not agree with it. When, having been given all the relevant information and advice, the Minister has taken a decision, it is the duty of civil servants loyally to carry out that decision with precisely the same energy and good will, whether they agree with it or not.

8. Civil servants are under an obligation to keep the confidences to which they become privy in the course of their work; not only the maintenance of the trust between Ministers and civil servants but also the efficiency of government depend on their doing so. There is and must be a general duty upon every civil servant, serving or retired, not without authority to make disclosures which breach that obligation. This duty applies to any document or information or knowledge of the course of business, which has come to a civil servant in confidence in the course of duty. Any such unauthorised disclosures, whether for political or personal motives, or for pecuniary gain, and quite apart from liability to prosecution under the Official Secrets Acts, result in the civil servant concerned forfeiting the trust that is put in him or her as an employee and making him or her liable to disciplinary action including the possibility of dismissal, or to civil law proceedings. He or she also undermines the confidence that ought to subsist between Ministers and civil servants and thus damages colleagues and the Service as well as him or herself.

9. Civil servants often find themselves in situations where they are required or expected to give information to a Parliamentary Select Committee, to the media, or to individuals. In doing so they should be guided by the policy of the Government on evidence to Select Committees, as set out in memoranda of guidance issued from time to time, and on the disclosure of information, by any specifically departmental policies in relation to departmental information, and by the requirements of security and confidentiality. In this respect, however, as in other respects, the civil servant's first duty is to his or her Minister. Thus, when a civil servant gives evidence to a Select Committee on the policies or actions of his or her Department, he or she does so as the representative of the Minister in charge of the Department and subject to the Minister's instructions[1], and is accountable to the Minister for the evidence which he or she gives. As explained in paragraph 2, the ultimate responsibility lies with Ministers, and not with civil servants, to decide what information should be made available, and how and when it should be released, whether it is to Parliament, to Select Committees, to the media or to individuals. It is not acceptable for a serving or former civil servant to seek to frustrate policies or decisions of Ministers by the disclosure outside the Government of information to which he or she has had access as a civil servant.

10. The previous paragraphs have set out the basic principles which govern the relations between Ministers and civil servants. The rest of this note deals with particular aspects of conduct which derive from them, where it may be felt that more detailed guidance would be helpful.

11. A civil servant should not be required to do anything unlawful. In the very unlikely event of a civil servant being asked to do something which he or she believes would put him or her in clear breach of the law, the matter should be reported to a senior officer or to the Principal Establishment Officer, who should if necessary seek the advice of the Legal Adviser to the Department. If legal advice confirms that the action would be likely to be held to be unlawful, the matter should be reported in writing to the Permanent Head of the Department.

12. There may exceptionally be circumstances in which a civil servant considers that he or she is being asked to act in a manner which appears to him or her to be improper, unethical or in breach of constitutional conventions, or to involve possible maladministration, or to be otherwise inconsistent with the standards of conduct prescribed in this memorandum and in the relevant Civil Service codes and guides. In such an event the matter should be reported to a senior officer, and if appropriate to the Permanent Head of the Department.

13. Civil servants should always recall that it is Ministers, and not they, who bear political responsibility. A civil servant should not decline to take, or abstain from taking, an action because to do so would conflict with his or her personal opinions on matters of political choice or judgment between alternative or competing objectives and benefits; he or she should consider the possibility of declining only if taking or abstaining from the action in question is felt to be directly contrary to deeply held personal conviction on a fundamental issue of conscience.

14. A civil servant who feels that to act or to abstain from acting in a particular way, or to acquiesce in a particular decision or course of action, would raise for him or her a fundamental issue of conscience, or is so profoundly opposed to a policy as to feel unable conscientiously to administer it in accordance with the standards described in this note, should consult a senior officer. If necessary, and if the problem cannot be resolved by any other means, the civil servant may take the matter up with the Permanent Head of the Department and also has a right, in the last resort, to have the matter referred to the Head of the Home Civil Service through the Permanent Head of the Department; detailed provisions for such appeals are included in the Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code. If the matter still cannot

be resolved on a basis which the civil servant concerned is able to accept, he or she must either carry out his or her instructions or resign from the public service—though even after resignation he or she will still be bound to keep the confidences to which he or she has become privy as a civil servant.

[1] A Permanent Head of a Department giving evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts does so by virtue of his duties and responsibilities as an Accounting Officer as defined in the Treasury memorandum on *The Responsibilities of an Accounting Officer;* but this is without prejudice to the Minister's responsibility and accountability to Parliament in respect of the policies, actions and conduct of his Department.

Robert Armstrong

CIVIL SERVICE

Non-Departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many non-departmental public bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. Luce: On 1 April 1987 there were 1,643 non-departmental public bodies. That is 15 fewer than last year and 524 fewer than in 1979. These bodies are listed in "Public Bodies 1987" published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Waste Paper

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Luce: Some of the envelopes, file covers, paper sacks and other such products used by my Department contain an element of recycled paper. As much waste paper as possible goes for recycling.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

96. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will respond to the European Commission's proposed directive on the provision of information upon the energy efficiency of buildings; and if he will make an assessment of the effect of an energy efficiency initiative upon the generation of employment in the construction industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At a meeting of the European Council of Energy Ministers on 13 November, the Ministers did not agree that it was appropriate to impose a mandatory requirement for home energy audits. Discussions will, however, continue on a possible Council "recommendation" to improve information on the energy efficiency of buildings.

Experience of such an initiative in Denmark suggests that the effect on employment in the construction industry would depend on a high level of subsidies to householders.

Electricity Sales

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what estimates his Department has made of the amount of electricity sold by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. from Chapelcross to the South of Scotland Electricity Board in 1986-87;

(2) what estimate his Department has made of the amount of electricity sold by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. from Sellafield to the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been informed by British Nuclear Fuels plc that, during the 1986-87 financial year, the company sold 1·45 TWh of electricity from their station at Chapelcross to the South of Scotland Electricity Board and 1·25 TWh of electricity from its station at Calder Hall (Sellafield) to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recyling.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department uses some envelopes made from recycled paper. Waste paper collected from the Department by Her Majesty's Stationery Office goes for recycling.

Coal Imports (Seaham Harbour)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give figures for the volume and value of coal imported through Seaham harbour for each year from 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the purposes of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise's import statistics, Seaham harbour is included within the port of Sunderland. The following table shows the total volume, total value, and hence the average unit value, of coal imported through Sunderland for each year from 1979.

Coal Imports through Sunderland: 1979 to 1986

	Volume (tonnes)	*Value* (£'000)	*Average Unit Value* £/tonne
1979	22,254	1,065	47·86
1980	12,605	802	63·63
1981	5,895	437	74·13
1982	43,243	2,314	53·51
1983	101,544	4,957	48·82
1984	23,111	1,220	52·79
1985	88,213	4,555	51·64
1986	242,871	9,348	38·49

British Coal

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on British Coal's external financing limit for 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's external financing limit for 1987-88 is to be increased from £727 million to £842 million. This increase reflects price reductions of over £300 million conceded by British Coal in current difficult market conditions. This is partly offset by projected operating cost savings of over £200 million compared with the assumptions underlying the original limit of £727 million. British Coal remain committed to achieving break-even in 1988-89.

This increase is being charged to the reserve and will not add to the public expenditure planning total.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals from London Regional Transport for investment designed to improve the quality of service on the northern line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received and approved proposals, at a cost of some £45 million, for 16 additional trains which will enhance services and relieve overcrowding on five Underground lines, notably the Northern line. London Underground is now taking delivery of the new trains and the higher service levels should be operating by the end next year. In addition we have recently approved a £20 million scheme to replace existing lifts at Angel station, with flights of escalators, emerging in a new ticket hall. This facility—on which work will commence early in the New Year—will bring substantial improvements in conditions for passengers at the station. The Government have not to date refused any investment proposed for the Underground.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what has been the effect of placing maintenance and installation on the London Underground out to tender on a number of stations without escalator and lift services at any one time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Tendering for maintenance contracts has so far been undertaken for 25 escalators—where the work was won by the in-house team—and seven lifts, where an outside contractor bid successfully for the contract. I am advised that both contracts are operating well and that there is no adverse effect on reliability. Installation of lifts and escalators has always been carried out by external contractors.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the current incidence of driver shortages and defective rolling stock on the London Underground and as to what effect these are having on services, with particular reference to overcrowding, delays and safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand London Underground is currently experiencing a shortage of drivers, particularly on the Northern line, and is taking steps to recruit the necessary staff. Safety is a first priority and trains are not run, or are taken out of service, if they become defective. This inevitably affects service levels. In the week ending 27 November, I am informed that just over 1 per cent. of scheduled trips were cancelled because of staff sickness or non-availability; and less than 2 per cent. of scheduled peak hour trips were cancelled due to shortage of rolling stock or its withdrawal from service.

A1-A1 Motorway (Wetherby)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the A1 from Wetherby to the A1 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The White Paper "Policy for Roads in England: 1987" shows the schemes we have planned. They are:

Scheme	*Advancement of scheme*
Wetherby Bypass	Under construction
Wetherby to Dishforth Widening	At public inquiry
Dishforth Interchange Improvement	Work planned for start in 1988
Dishforth to Scotch Corner Carriageway Improvements	Added to the Programme earlier this year
Dishforth to Scotch Corner Junction Improvement Phase I (Gatenby Lane Junction)	Planned for start of construction in the period April 1989 to March 1991
Dishforth to Scotch Corner Junction Improvements Phase 2	Planned for start of construction in the period from April 1991 on-wards.

A19 (Dishforth)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the A19 from Dishforth to the Tyne tunnel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are well advanced with our plans to provide dual carriageways on the remaining two-mile section of this A19-A168 route where such a standard of road has not already been provided. Constructional work on this scheme, which includes the improvement of the junction with the A1 at Dishforth, is planned to start in 1988.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to how he assesses London Regional Transport need for support from the taxpayer, with particular reference to his Department's press release No. 541, following the Autumn Statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Grant is provided to LRT to the extent to which it cannot cover its running costs and fund its investment needs from traffic income and other revenues. The Government fully support the need for a high level of investment by LRT to modernise and expand the system. As announced at the time of the Autumn Statement, LRT's investment next year will be increased by more than £50 million, to £365 million. LRT's requirement for external finance will however be reduced by more than £50 million to £221 million.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the level of subsidy to London Regional Transport per thousand passengers at constant 1987 prices for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: LRT receives both revenue support and capital grant. The figures requested for both are as follows:

	Revenue support per thousand passenger journeys (1986-87 prices)	*Capital grant per thousand passenger journeys (1986-87 prices)*
1979	50·44	92·45
1980	70·49	98·39
1981	121·28	109·75
1982	100·52	99·93
1983	124·86	115·55
1984-85[1]	92·16	73·90
1985-86	69·28	107·43
1986-87	34·75	118·56

[1] 15 months.

Hazardous Goods

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the setting up of joint committees at county level to monitor the transportation of hazardous goods and materials in areas where they are loaded or unloaded, consisting of police, fire, ambulance and local authority services, together with employers and trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We would welcome and support any initiatives at county level which might usefully draw on the experience of the liaison panel already in existence in Cleveland.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department monitors the driving hours, breaks and rest periods of drivers in vehicles greater than three and a half tons, since the increase in heavy goods vehicle drivers' hours brought about by the EEC review in September 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tachograph charts which show drivers' hours, breaks and rest periods, are checked by the Department's traffic examiners during visits to operators' premises and by both the examiners and the police at the roadside. Charts are also screened by the Department's eleven traffic area offices, using computerised equipment.

The EC regulations which became effective last year extended daily driving from eight to nine hours (with provision for up to 10 hours twice a week) but reduced overall driving from 92 hours to 90 hours in any fortnight.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines have been issued to ensure that regulations are respected concerning those drivers in vehicles greater than three and a half tons, now that driving hours have been extended.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Over 100,000 guide books (GV262) on the new drivers' hours rules have been issued free of charge by the Department since September 1986.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the new extended driving hours for drivers in vehicles over three and a half tons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new rules were agreed after two years of detailed discussion within the European Community and have been in place for a little over a year.

We will keep the rules under review.

Tachograph Records

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines he has issued, or proposes to issue, to ensure that enforcement officers within his Department, when visiting the premises of haulage companies for the inspection of tachograph records see both safety representatives as well as management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When visiting operators' premises, traffic examiners are always willing to advise operators on enforcement and safety matters. It is a management responsibility to see that workers and their representatives are kept informed.

Vehicle Companies (Register)

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the practicalities of establishing a register of vehicle companies to ensure that the transportation of goods and materials on the roads be handled only by those companies so registered.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Anyone who wishes to use a goods vehicle with a gross weight of more than 3·5 tonnes must hold an operator's licence. These are issued by the independent licensing authorities who keep a record of operators within their traffic areas.

A47 Bypass (East Norton)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has anything to add to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *404*, with respect to the A47 bypass of East Norton.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the answer of 16 November, I named the schemes which are in the Government's national trunk road programme. Other schemes, each valued at under £1 million, are in the east midlands regional programme. The A47 East Norton bypass is one of them. Subject to the completion of statutory procedures, construction could start in 1990.

Coal (Transport)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the tonnage of domestic coal transported by rail annually since 1983; and if he will also indicate in percentage terms that tonnage in relation to total domestic coal transported for the same period.

Mr. David Mitchell: Figures for coal transport do not distinguish between domestically produced and imported coal. The figures for total tonnes and rail share are as follows:

	BR Coal and Coke Traffic (Tonnes: Millions)	*BR per cent. of total Coal and Coke traffic*
1983	87·9	53
1984	25·5	29
1985	65·9	45
1986	79·7	52

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* those professions or trades whose vocational qualifications have been reviewed by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications to date.

Mr. Dunn: Early in 1987, following the production of draft criteria for its vocational qualifications framework, the national council established nine project groups to test out those criteria by reviewing and advising on the standards of competence and qualifications in the fields of agriculture, electrical contracting, engineering manufacture, heating and ventilation, hotel and catering, motor vehicle repair and maintenance, office occupations, retail, and retail travel. The groups have now submitted interim

or final reports, and a number of qualifications have been accredited, mostly based on combinations of existing qualifications. The council is now considering the results of this process, and hopes soon to publish fuller and more definitive criteria and to invite interested parties in all sectors of employment to submit qualifications for accreditation. The council is also consulting widely with professional bodies to see how their qualifications may be associated with the national vocational qualification framework.

Educational Reform

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications for *(a)* the standard of education and *(b)* school budgets in those Inner London education authority boroughs which decide to stay in the Inner London education authority, in the event that a significant proportion of the wealthier less deprived boroughs decide to opt out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The fact that boroughs dissatisfied with ILEA's educational and financial performance will be able to apply to opt out should act as a spur to improvements within ILEA. But the process of opting out should not in itself have a significant effect on either educational standards or school budgets in those inner London boroughs which decide to stay within the authority. Under the new arrangements for local government finance which will apply from 1 April 1990, inner London boroughs will receive revenue support grant related to their needs; any increase in average needs for boroughs remaining within ILEA due to other boroughs opting out will be reflected in an increase in grant.

Goldsmiths College

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether appropriate funding will be made available to Goldsmiths college, London, in order to secure its incorporation into the University of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I wrote to the vice-chancellor of London university on 20 November giving the following information about the amounts that my right hon. Friend is prepared to make available for the funding of Goldsmiths college over the next three academic years.

£ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91 (August-March)*
	13·66	12·96	7·61
Less Science[1]		0·56	0·34
Net Total	13·66	12·40	7·27

[1] Negotiations are continuing about the possible transfer of Goldsmiths' Science courses to other institutions.

While it has not proved possible to provide a precise year-on-year match between the available funding and the amounts which the college considered would be necessary to enable it to operate as a UGC and university court-funded school of London university, I understand that it should be possible for the college to make the required adjustments in the phasing of its expenditure. In addition the Secretary of State has also indicated his willingness to transfer the following amounts to the universities Vote to meet the costs of restructuring.

Financial year	£
1988-89	39,000
1989-90	128,000
1990-91	160,000

Speech Therapy

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will bring forward proposals to expand speech therapy provision in schools.

Mr. Dunn: The provision of health services to local education authorities is a function of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, under the provisions of the National Health Service Act 1977. Schedule 10 of the Education Reform Bill now before Parliament extends that duty to cover the grant-maintained schools which it is proposed should be established under the Bill. My right hon. Friends do not at present plan to bring forward any other proposals in this field.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodian Refugees

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he takes to seek to ensure that United Kingdom public funds do not go to those organisations, claiming to represent or care for refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border, which are front organisations for the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot.

Mr. Eggar: We provide assistance to the Cambodian refugees in camps in Thailand through United Nations agencies. We also provide a small amount of bilateral humanitarian assistance direct to the non-Communist groups. We have stipulated to the United Nations agencies that our assistance must not go to the Khmer Rouge. They have assured us that it does not.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's Stationery Office supplies paper to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and make our waste paper collections. It encourages the greater use of recycled fibre in the paper it purchases and sends suitable waste paper for recycling.

South Africa

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 19 November, *Official Report*, column *618*, what is his estimate of the cost of providing the information originally requested about British nationals arrested, tried and imprisoned in South Africa.

Mr. Eggar: It is estimated that the cost would be in excess of the £200 limit recommended by central guidance for answering hon. Members' questions.

Inflation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the current rate of inflation for all the EEC countries, together with the Scandinavian countries, United States of America, Canada and Japan.

Mr. Mellor: The figures are as follows:

	Consumer prices September 1987 Change over 12 months earlier per cent.
Belgium	1·7
Denmark	3·6
France	3·2
Germany	0·4
Greece	14·7
Ireland	3·2
Italy	5·2
Luxembourg	0·2
Netherlands	0·2
Portugal	9·3
Spain	4·4
United Kingdom	4·2
Norway	7·8
Sweden	5·0
United States of America	4·3
Canada	4·5
Japan	1·1

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Main Economic Indicators, November 1987

VAT

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the value added tax bands and rates in the individual member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply. According to the latest information available, rates of VAT in the EC member states are as follows:

EC VAT Rates: 1 November 1987

	Standard Rate per cent.	*Increased/ Luxury Rate(s) per cent.*	*Reduced Rate(s) per cent.*
Belgium	19	25, [1]33	Zero, 6, 17
Denmark	22	—	Zero
France	18·6	33⅓	5·5, 7
Germany	14	—	7
Greece	18	36	6
Ireland	25	—	Zero, 10
Italy	18	38	Zero, 2, 9
Luxembourg	12	—	3, 6
Netherlands	20	—	6
Portugal[2]	16, [3]12	30, [3]21	Zero, 8, [3]6
Spain	12	33	Zero, 6
United Kingdom	15	—	Zero

Notes:

[1] Higher rate includes 8 per cent. luxury tax and applies to restricted selection of goods, including, inter alia, arms, furs, jewellery, perfumes and cosmetics.

[2] Portugal is obliged to apply the common VAT system only from 1.1.89.

[3] Lower rates apply in the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira Archipelagoes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Citizenship

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of the printing errors on the guide form 'R'—"Registration as a British Citizen", he will extend the time limit for registration by six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We do not accept that there are any such errors in the guide accompanying form R, nor any ambiguities which might lead someone eligible to conclude that he need not apply.

Mr. Bashar Samara

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why Mr. Bashar Samara was deported from the United Kingdom and whether he will make a statement;

(2) to which country Mr. Bashar Samara was deported in September.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Samara was refused entry to the United Kingdom on 18 September 1987 on the grounds that his exclusion was conducive to the public good for reasons of national security. He was removed to Israel on 19 September 1987.

Passports

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by the Passport Office to (i) issue and (ii) renew passports.

Mr. Renton: The time taken to deal with passport applications varies from office to office. Current delay times for non-urgent applications of all types at each of the regional offices are as follows:

	Working days
London	36
Peterborough	15
Newport	10
Glasgow	8
Liverpool	6
Belfast	2

Urgent applications are given priority; all others are dealt with in date of receipt order, irrespective of the type of application.

Prisoners (Guilt Admissions)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Merseyside on the number of admissions of guilt resulting from prison visits by police officers during the last year; and if he will review the guidelines he issues on the obtaining of admissions in this way, in the light of information supplied by Merseyside police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Merseyside that, in 1986, 36,320 offences were cleared up following prison visits by his officers. These represent 59 per cent. of all offences detected by his force

in that year. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary issued guidelines on the use of prison visits to clear up crimes earlier this year and is satisfied that practice in Merseyside accords with them.

Television Licences

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the additional revenue which would be raised by charging hotels the full television licence fee on every television which they provide for the use of hotel guests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information on which to base an estimate could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Election Expenses

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long after the general elections of 1983 or 1979 the return of candidates' expenses was published; when he intends to publish the 1987 return; whether its preparation is now complete with all returns in; by whom the analysis is being done; and how many of those returns so far received are over the maximum.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The returns of candidates' expenses following the general elections of 3 May 1979 and 9 June 1983 were published on 11 February 1980 and 12 December 1983 respectively. As on those occasions, the 1987 returns are being compiled by the statistical department of the Home Office. The information is not yet complete but my right hon. Friend hopes that the publication will be available by next February. Details of any candidates whose expenditure is over the permitted maximum will not be published until investigations are complete.

Prisoners (Works of Art)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to increase the public access to prisoners' works of art.

Mr. John Patten: There are no plans to alter the current arrangements for public access to prisoners' works of art. Prison governors already have discretion to allow inmates to enter works of art for public competition or exhibition and many local initiatives are taken in this area in addition to a national competition and exhibition of prisoners' art sponsored each year by the Koestler Trust. The next Koestler Trust exhibition is planned to take place at the royal festival hall between mid-September and mid-October 1988.

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to take action to relieve pressures on Risley remand centre.

Mr. John Patten: We have taken a number of measures to relieve the pressure of the overcrowding at Risley remand centre. We took advantage of the reduction in the prison population brought about by the change in the remission rules earlier this year, to create more space for remand prisoners elsewhere in the north-west. We opened New Hall as a female prison in August, to take female prisoners who would otherwise have been sent to Risley. Male prisoners are drafted out at regular intervals to the trials unit at Preston prison. We have announced plans to provide accommodation for young offenders on remand at Hindley youth custody centre. We shall continue to keep the situation at Risley under review.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities are available for drug rehabilitation in Her Majesty's prison Holloway.

Mr. John Patten: If on reception at Holloway a person is identified as having a history of drug misuse she is offered the treatment the medical officer, in her individual clinical judgment, considers necessary. Subsequent support after withdrawal could include psychotherapy.

Prisoners (Psychiatry)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of inmates of Her Majesty's prison Holloway are estimated to suffer from significant psychiatric problems.

Mr. John Patten: A census taken by prison medical officers at Holloway on 1 October 1986 of sentenced inmates serving six months and over showed that there were eight (7 per cent.) who were considered to require specialised therapeutic facilities for mental disorder. On the same date 22 unsentenced inmates, (9 per cent.) were considered to be suffering from mental disorder of a type or degree such that they would be detainable under the Mental Health Act 1983.

The latest returns of the number of inmates considered to be detainable under that Act show that on 31 March 1987 there were 13 (three sentenced and 10 unsentenced), or 3·5 per cent. of the total population at Holloway prison.

Satellite Information Services

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the latest agreement between Satellite Information Services and the horse racing and greyhound racing industries with regard to the duration of the agreement and representation on the board of Satellite Information Services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: These are commercial matters for the parties concerned.

Immigration

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many British citizens have unsuccessfully applied for permission for spouses and financés from Australia to enter the United Kingdom for residence since 1978; and what evidence was offered in an attempt to prove that the marriage or engagement was a genuine one;

(2) how many British citizens have successfully applied for permission for spouses or fiancés from Australia to enter the United Kingdom for residence since 1978; and what evidence was offered to prove that the marriage or engagement was a genuine one.

Mr. Renton: The only information readily available is of the numbers of citizens of Australia who have been

accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom as spouses: this information is published annually in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom", tables 3 and 4 of the latest issue for 1986 (Cm. 166), and is brought together in the table. Copies of this publication are in the Library.

The sponsors may have been British citizens or persons already settled in the United Kingdom or persons being accepted for settlement in their own right at the same time. The requirements for any person seeking to settle in the United Kingdom as a spouse are set out in the Immigration Rules. If the hon. Member has any specific case in mind, he may care to write to me about it.

Citizens of Australia accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom as spouses, 1978 to 1986

Year	*Number*
1978	850
1979	760
1980	570
1981	400
1982	320
1983	450
1984	620
1985	630
1986	480

Entry Clearance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, he will provide a breakdown in the most convenient form available of the reasons for refusal of entry to those in possession of a valid entry clearance.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the information is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants (Industrial Action)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many working days were lost in his Department due to industrial action by civil servants in the period 1976-86.

Mr. Hurd: Comprehensive figures for the years 1976-80 are not readily available, although I can say that 8,220 working days were lost in the Home Office during the 1979 Civil Service pay dispute. The number of working days lost through industrial action in the years 1981-86 was 12,282.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Fire Precautions Order 1976 so as to have trainees included in the count when determining whether or not a premise requires a fire certificate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When the Fire Precautions (Factories, Offices, Shops and Railway Premises) Order 1976 is replaced to give effect to provisions contained in the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987, provisions will be included in the new order for trainees to be counted as employees for the purpose of determining whether premises require a fire certificate.

Irish Prisoners

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A Irish prisoners have been transferred at their own request from England and Wales to Northern Ireland since 1973.

Mr. John Patten: The information readily available shows that five category A inmates sentenced in England and Wales have been permanently transferred to establishments in Northern Ireland since 1973. All are thought to have been originally from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Truong Nguyen Thank

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to reply to the letter of 1 July from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mr. Truong Nguyen Thank.

Mr. Renton: I am sorry that the hon. Member has not had an earlier reply to his letter of 1 July. Further inquiries are needed before a decision can be taken in this case. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as these are completed.

Mr. T. D. Phung

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to provide a substantive response to the letter of 17 March from the hon. Member for Woolwich about the case of Mr. T. D. Phung.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the pressure of work within the refugee section of the immigration and nationality department, and the need to make further inquiries of Mr. Phung have delayed consideration of this case. We are at present awaiting translation of documents submitted by Mr. Phung in Chinese and I hope to be able to send a substantive reply to the letter of 17 March once this is available.

Mr. Yao Kwong Yan

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to reply to the letter of 6 July from the hon. Member for Woolwich about Mr. Yao Kwong Yan.

Mr. Renton: I am writing to the hon. Member today.

Radio 4

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairman of the board of governors of the BBC to discuss the future of Radio 4.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the BBC periodically to discuss a range of current broadcasting issues, but the future of particular radio services is a matter for the BBC within the resources available to it.

John Manley

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish an independent public inquiry into all decisions taken by his Department concerning John Manley, sentenced to life at Leeds Crown court for killing Donald Swaine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I would refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave yesterday to questions from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) which set out the action which we have already taken to review the case.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in his Department's procedures he has introduced as a result of the case of John Manley; what further changes in procedures he proposes to make; what proposals he has received from the probation service for changes in procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave yesterday to questions from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). If the further examination of this case suggests that there is scope for improving procedures, this will be carefully considered. We shall gladly take into account any proposals which may be received from the probation service.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why requests by Bradford probation service for John Manley to be readmitted to Rampton hospital were refused by his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to replies I gave yesterday to questions from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). The West Yorkshire probation service did not specifically request that Mr. Manley should be recalled to Rampton hospital.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he authorised the release of John Manley from Rampton hospital in 1981; and what terms and conditions were applied to his release.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave yesterday to Questions from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) which refer to a review conducted earlier this year of the handling of this case. The decision to release Mr. Manley from Rampton hospital was based on medical advice that he was fit to be conditionally discharged. The conditions of discharge were that Mr. Manley, on leaving hospital, should go immediately to a hostel in Lincoln; that he should reside there under the supervision of a social worker appointed by the local authority; that he should keep in touch with and receive home visits from the supervising officer, as directed by that officer; and that he should attend a psychiatric out-patient clinic, as directed by a consultant psychiatrist at Rampton hospital.

Horse Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total number of bookmakers registered for British horse racing courses; and if he is able to give a regional breakdown.

Mr. John Patten: Information available from Customs and Excise shows that on 31 March 1987 1,543 bookmakers were registered to pay duty for on-course bookmaking at racecourses or greyhound tracks (or both) in Great Britain. The regional breakdown is as follows:

	Number
Birmingham	149
Bristol	25
South Wales	96
Dover	22
East Anglia	33
Leeds	169
Liverpool	72
London	170
Manchester	55
Northern England (Newcastle)	175
Northampton	107
Nottingham	81
South West England (Plymouth)	53
Reading	61
Southampton	80
Aberdeen	2
Edinburgh	105
Glasgow	88
	1,543

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total amounts of money ploughed back into British horse racing courses through the totalisator system since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The Horserace Totalisator Board has contributed £15·5 million to racing since 1979 in levy payments to racecourses and in sponsorship. In doing so, the board has drawn on proceeds from its bookmaking and credit betting, as well as its racecourse totalisator business.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of horses killed on British racecourses in the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Safety standards on racecourses are the responsibility of the Jockey Club and the racecourse authorities. We do not hold information on the number of horses killed on racecourses.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total number of persons employed in horseracing for each year since 1979; and if he is able to provide a breakdown between full-time and part-time employment.

Mr. John Patten: Information about employment in horseracing is not separately identified in the centrally collected statistics on employment.

Mr. Alan Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the number of deaths and serious accidents which have occurred to those employed in the horse racing industry in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: No comprehensive figures are kept centrally. Details of those claiming benefit from the racing industry benefit scheme are given in the reports of the Horserace Betting Levy Board which are laid before Parliament annually.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many registered horse racing courses there are in Britain.

Mr. John Patten: Fifty-nine. Sixty-six racecourses hold certificates of approval issued by the Horserace Betting Levy Board; seven of these relate to harness racing.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total registered attendances at British horse racing courses in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Information available from the Racing Industry's statistical bureau shows the following total racecourse attendances:

	Number
1979	4,105,327
1980	4,140,358
1981	3,752,757
1982	3,703,653
1983	3,522,558
1984	3,756,926
1985	3,749,811
1986	3,958,473

DEFENCE

Training

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of all the countries which have had access to the facilities for training at British military establishments during the current year.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the countries which have been provided with training at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom during the current financial year:

Algeria
Australia
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Bermuda
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Burma
Cameroon
Canada
Chile
Congo
Cyprus
Denmark
Egypt
El Salvador
Federal Republic of Germany
Fiji
Finland
France
Gambia
Ghana
Gibraltar
Greece
Guyana
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lesotho
Luxembourg
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Portugal
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Somalia
South Korea
Spain
Sri Lanka
St. Vincent
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
Trinidad
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
Uganda
United States of America
Yemen Arab Republic
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of all the countries which have had access to training by members of Her Majesty's armed forces serving overseas on secondment or loan during the current year.

Mr. Freeman: The following shows the countries and territories in which members of Her Majesty's armed forces have served on loan or secondment terms during the current financial year:

Australia
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Bermuda
Brunei
Dominica
Fiji
Gambia
Ghana
Hong Kong
Indonesia
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lesotho
Mauritius
New Zealand
Nigeria
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Sudan

Swaziland
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
Zimbabwe[1]

[1] Since January 1986 a wing of the British military advisory and training team has been specifically allocated to train *Mozambican* troops within Zimbabwe.

Some of these personnel have filled posts in overseas staff colleges and similiar establishments which may have been attended by students from countries other than the host nation. I regret that records of such students are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Romanian Vessel Fundulea

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the assistance given to the Romanian vessel Fundulea by the Royal Navy frigate Battleaxe in the Straits of Hormuz on 23 November; and to what extent Royal Naval vessels are permitted to aid foreign shipping under attack.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The role of the Armilla patrol is to uphold the safety of British merchant shipping in the Gulf area. It is our long-standing practice not to comment on the patrol's rules of engagement in fulfilling this task.

Any Royal Naval ship will, on humanitarian grounds, take appropriate action to help save life. In this particular case, following reports that the Fundulea had been attacked and was on fire, HMS Battleaxe deployed a Lynx helicopter to help search for survivors. The helicopter remained in the area of the stricken vessel until it was confirmed that all her company had been accounted for.

Tornado (Saudi Arabia)

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report progress with regard to the letting of design and construction civil engineering contracts for hardened shelters, airstrips, roadways and workshops ancillary to the supply of Tornado fighters to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Sainsbury: The memorandum of understanding signed with the Government of Saudi Arabia on 17 February 1986 covers a number of tasks including construction work. Some of this work is already underway, and discussions continue between the Ministry of Defence and the royal Saudi air force to agree the scope of future work. The Ministry of Defence's prime contractor for the whole project covered by the memorandum of understanding is British Aerospace, which is responsible for letting sub-contracts for design and construction.

US Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer 2 November, he will publish that part of the special arrangement between the United Kingdom and United States of America which relates to procedure following an accident involving United States nuclear weapons on British soil.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No. The documents setting out the special arrangements to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member on 2 November 1987 at column *607* are classified and cannot therefore be published.

AOR Vessels

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects all six AOR vessels to be in Royal Navy service.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions have not yet been taken on the size of the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel class, the first vessel of which is on order and is expected to enter service in the early 1990s.

Privatisation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any current plans for privatising services within the responsibility of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We shall continue with our policy of improving efficiency in the provision of defence support services through competition and increased involvement of the private sector.

Radioactive Materials

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the representative organisations which have been consulted regarding improved contingency and liaison arrangements for incidents arising from the transportation of radioactive weapons materials.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 2 February 1987 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) at column *516*.

Aircraft Carriers (Refits)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when it is planned the HMS Ark Royal and HMS Invincible will be refitted.

Mr. Sainsbury: HMS Invincible is currently undergoing refit at Devonport dockyard. Under existing plans HMS Ark Royal should be due for her first refit in the mid-1990s.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Secure Units

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the regional medium and interim secure units in England and Wales and indicate how many people, broken down into those awaiting transfer from special hospitals and those from other sources, are awaiting transfer to each unit; and if he will give the figures, where possible, for the last three years, together with an indication of the current average waiting time for transfer into each unit.

Mrs. Currie: The information held centrally regarding people awaiting transfer to permanent and declared interim secure units is in respect of special hospital patients only. Information is not available for the last three years, as historical data are not retained. The current position is provided in the table. Any question of the number of prisoners awaiting transfer to National Health Service secure units is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home

Secretary and the provision of health service facilities in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Region and Unit [P–permanent I–interim]	*Number of special hospital patients awaiting transfer to unit*[1]	*Length of wait*				
		Up to 3 months	*3 to 6 months*	*6 to 9 months*	*9 to 12 months*	*12 to 18 months*
Northern						
Hutton Unit, St. Lukes Hospital (P)	1	1	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire						
Newton Lodge, Fieldhead Hospital (P)	1	1	—	—	—	—
Broadgate Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clifton Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—
Storthes Hall Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
High Royds Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stanley Royal Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trent						
Arnold Lodge, Towers Hospital (P)	1	1	—	—	—	—
East Anglian						
Norvic Clinic, St. Andrews Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Thames						
Three Bridges Unit, St. Bernards Hospital (P)	3	1	—	1	1	—
North East Thames						
Runwell Hospital Southend (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Friern Hospital, New Southgate (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
South East Thames						
Denis Hill Unit, Bethlem Royal Hospital (P)	3	1	1	—	1	—
Cane Hill Unit Coulsdon (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bracton Clinic, Bexley (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trevor Gibbons Clinic, Maidstone (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ashenhill Clinic, Hellingly (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wessex						
Ravenswood House, Knowle Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oxford						
Sycamores Unit, Borocourt Hospital (P)	1	—	—	—	—	1
South Western						
Butler Clinic, Langdon Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fromeside Clinic, Glenside Hospital (P) [Clinic scheduled to open summer 1988]	1	1	—	—	—	—
Secure Unit Glenside Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands						
Reaside Clinic, Rubery Hill Hospital (P)	2	2	—	—	—	—
Coleshill Hall Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mersey						
Scott Clinic Rainhill Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Western						
Gardiner Unit (Adolescent), Prestwich Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Edenfield Centre (Adult), Prestwich Hospital (P)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Langdale Unit, Whittingham Hospital (I)	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Figures relate to special hospital patients waiting to move to permanent or declared interim secure units either on trial leave or permanent transfer, for whom a place has been offered and, in the case of restricted patients, the Home Secretary's consent to the move has been given.

Cholesterol

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of recent research indicating the prevalence of high rates of cholesterol in British adults, he will launch a campaign along the lines of that in the United States, designed to encourage people to establish their own cholesterol level; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I am conscious that medical opinion in this country is evolving as new scientific results become available. Most doctors already agree that for families with a history of heart disease it is important to consider whether cholesterol levels are elevated.

The "Look After Your Heart" campaign, which was launched in April 1987, encourages people to follow a diet low in fat and particularly saturated fat, and to give up smoking. The effect of these changes could be expected to

reduce average levels of cholesterol in the population as a whole. As the campaign develops, we will keep closely in touch with medical opinion on the question of cholesterol measurement.

Doctors (Merit Awards)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total amount paid in merit awards to doctors in the North Staffordshire district health authority for 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) what was the total amount paid in merit awards to doctors in the west midlands region in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to consult West Midlands regional health authority.

Civil Servants (Industrial Action)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many working days were lost in his Department due to industrial action by civil servants in the period 1976-86.

Mr. Newton: I regret that no information is available on the number of working days lost through industrial action in the period 1976-80. Working days lost from 1981-86 were as follows:

	Number
1981	161,562
1982	86,302
1983	17,408
1984	106,733
1985	24,803
1986	31,608

Foreign Nationals (Treatment)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the annual cost to the National Health Service of the treatment by general practitioners of foreign nationals from countries which do not have reciprocal arrangements with the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. John Manley

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services at what stage during proceedings the medical records of John Manley, sentenced in Lincoln in 1986 for assaulting his wife, were made available to the court.

Mrs. Currie: The sentence to which the hon. Member refers was given in 1983. At no stage during the proceedings did the Department make Mr. Manley's medical records available to the court.

Intensive Care Nurses

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the representations he has received during the past 12 months on the shortage of specialist intensive care nurses; what his response has been in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: During the past 12 months the Department has received some 40 letters which refer to the shortage of specialist intensive care nurses. In responding to those letters, we have explained that although there have been significant increases in qualified nursing staff working in intensive care units (for example, a 75 per cent. increase in general intensive care and 142 per cent. in paediatric intensive care between 1981 and 1986) and an increase of 15 per cent. in the number of nurses undergoing specialist training in intensive care in the year ending 31 March 1987 over the previous year, we recognise there are staffing difficulties in some locations. Action is being taken to overcome these difficulties. Current central activities include a joint NHS-DHSS working group on equal opportunities for women which is aiming to find better ways of retaining existing staff; the Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council is reviewing the nursing clinical grading structure with the aim of creating a more flexible structure which can recognise individual skills and responsibility; the regional health authority chairmen have commissioned a study to examine factors influencing recruitment and retention and suggest improvements; and a career development project group has been set up to examine the scope for more attractive career goals for nurses.

Pensioners (Benefits)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of how many pensioners in Scotland now receiving housing benefits will lose rights after the change in the social security system in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available.

Legionnaires' Disease

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now publish the second report of the committee of inquiry into the outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in Stafford in April 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have arranged for this report to be published today and a copy has been placed in the Library.

In its second and final report, the committee has considered and dealt with that part of its terms of reference which asked it to

"make recommendations on any action necessary to reduce the danger of future outbreaks originating in hospitals, other buildings and elsewhere".

I welcome the report. The Government are grateful to Sir John Badenoch and his committee for their comprehensive review of current knowledge of the disease and its transmission and for their balanced assessment of what needs to be done to minimise the risks of future outbreaks.

The report's recommendations have implications for a range of Government Departments, health and local authorities, industry and the medical and engineering professions, and for future study and research into the disease. In conjunction with other relevant departments, the Department will take forward consideration and follow-up action on those recommendations which are the responsibility of Government, and will monitor progress towards implementing the recommendations as a whole.

Two health notices were issued in May 1987, following the committee's first report, to supplement earlier guidance. The first of these asked health authorities to

install dry-cooled air-conditioning systems in new hospital buildings, and to replace existing wet-spray systems when upgrading is required, unless this is absolutely precluded by space, weight or other considerations. It also confirmed existing advice on the safe operation and maintenance of wet-spray systems where they continue in use. The second advised on avoiding Legionella infection risks in hot and cold water systems. A code of practice on the operation of both cooling and water systems is expected to be published shortly.

Pensioners

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled pensioners currently claim supplementary benefit; and how many will *(a)* gain and *(b)* lose from the change to income support.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* It is estimated that around 175,000 pensioners currently receiving supplementary benefit will qualify for the higher pensioner premium on grounds of disability. Of these, around 60,000 will gain at the point of change (excluding those whose entitlement increased by less than 50p). There will be no losers as transitional protection ensures that any claimants who remain entitled to benefit and whose entitlement decreases will not lose at the point of change.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Bill

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing clause 3 of the Employment Bill 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: Individual responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and their Members" and representations on particular clauses of the Employment Bill have been treated in confidence by my Department. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that of the 67 comments received on the Green Paper proposal to give a statutory right for trade union members not to be subject to disciplinary proceedings for refusing to take industrial action, 16 expressed approval and 51 expressed disapproval.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of employers were meeting the quota established by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 in *(a)* June 1979, *(b)* June 1983 and *(c)* June 1987; and what is the most recent figure.

Mr. Lee: The percentage of employers within the scheme meeting their quota obligation in *(a)* June 1979 was 35·3 per cent., *(b)* June 1983 31·4 per cent. and *(c)* June 1987 27·3 per cent. June 1987 is the latest date when figures are available. A particular difficulty for employers is that only registered disabled people count towards the quota and the number of people choosing to register as disabled has declined over the years to the extent that the 3 per cent. cannot now be met overall.

MSC Trainees (Accidents)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of serious accidents sustained by Manpower Services Commission trainees within Easington constituency during the last three years.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mines

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers of Her Majesty's inspectors of mines operating within the north-east area of British Coal over the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers are as follows:

	Numbers
1 April	
1983	6
1984	7
1985	6
1986	5
April	
1987	5
November	
1987	4

Civil Servants (Industrial Action)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost in his Department due to industrial action by civil servants in the period 1976-86.

Mr. Nicholls: Figures for the number of working days lost in the DE group due to industrial action between 1976 and 1980 are not available. Statistics for the years 1981 to 1986 are set out below:

Year	*Number of days lost*
1981	59,959
1982	3,332
1983	271
1984	22,313
1985	2,007
1986	3,121

Disabled Workers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available on the percentage of disabled workers employed in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sectors.

Mr. Nicholls: The only information available is about the extent to which employers covered by the quota scheme meet their obligations under that scheme. On 1 June 1986, 8 per cent. of public sector employees, and 1 per cent. of private sector employees, were registered disabled.

Fit For Work Award

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers in *(a)* the public and

(b) the private sectors have won the Manpower Services Commission's fit for work award in each year since its foundation to 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of employers in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sectors who have won the Manpower Services Commission's fit for work award in each year since awards were first made are as follows:

	Public	*Private*
1980	3	97
1981	17	87
1982	15	86
1983	14	88
1984	24	76
1985	16	85
1986	20	80

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will extend the closure dates for applications under the job release scheme; what steps he has taken to inform the public of the closure of the scheme in addition to issuing a press notice on 3 November; if he will consider extending the scheme with substantially lower age limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The job release scheme is being closed because of a targeting of resources on our top priority of reducing long-term unemployment. I do not intend to extend the closure date for applications or to reduce the age limits. In addition to the announcements of the closure and a press notice, closure was advertised in the national press on 6 November.

YTS (Inspections)

Mr. Neillist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what form Her Majesty's Inspectorate type of inspections of YTS schemes will take; how many new staff will be involved; and what is his estimate of the average time between the inspections of placements.

Mr. Cope: The training standards advisory service has been set up to provide an independent assessment of the quality of training in YTS and to advise on how it could be improved.

The inspections undertaken by the TSAS take the form of a thorough survey of selected elements of the training programmes being delivered in YTS with emphasis on quality assurance. The service has 32 training standards inspectors engaged on YTS inspection, all of whom have a professional training background. The TSAS expects to visit every approved training organisation within a five-year period.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the operation of Professional and Executive Recruitment.

Mr. Fowler: Yes. Professional and Executive Recruitment provides specialised consultancy and advertising recruitment services to employers wishing to fill professional, technical, scientific, supervisory and managerial vacancies. It operates these services on a commercial basis, charging fees to employers and earning revenue from its free newspaper, *Executive Post*, which is sent direct to well over 100,000 jobseekers each week as part of PER's advisory and information service. PER's consultancy service extends from straightforward advertising to full recruitment assignments. It operates nationwide, from a network of 35 offices.

There is extensive and effective private sector provision in the activities which PER provides on a fee charging basis. The Government's view is that activities of an obviously commercial nature are better carried on in the private sector.

I have accordingly decided to seek professional advice about options for transferring PER out of the public sector. I have appointed Lloyds Merchant Bank Limited to act as my advisers and to report to me early in the New Year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner City Task Forces

94. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is being made with the inner city task forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I would inform my hon. Friend that my Department is responsible for the inner-city task forces.

All 16 of our inner-city task forces are now operational. Specifically the task forces aim to:

- Generate more jobs for local people.
- Encourage local enterprise development.
  - Provide enterprise training, financial and managerial assistance to new businesses.
- Improve the employability of local people, including those about to enter the labour market, by training programmes aimed at specific employment opportunities.
- Support initiatives designed to improve the environment, the provision of community services and to reduce the level of crime where these can be linked to the reintegration of local people into local economic activity.
- Improve co-ordination between different Government programmes, and with the activities of other local bodies such as (local authorities/the voluntary sector, private industry).
- Strengthen the capability of local organisations to undertake long term economic and enterprise development activity.
- Target the employment needs of specific disadvantaged groups, especially ethnic minorities.
- Develop innovative solutions to problems, which can be applied in other inner-city areas.

I encourage our task force teams, who are civil servants from several Departments and secondees from the private sector, to adopt an imaginative non-bureaucratic approach to the problems of their districts and to develop strong links with the residents and the businesses.

Over 250 projects with a focus on enterprise and jobs are already being funded in the areas they cover. The private sector is becoming increasingly involved with our efforts. Over 200 companies are already working with the task forces and more are looking to help. I believe that the task force approach is proving very successful now that some of them are well established and that all the task forces are a valuable instrument of direct Government help for the areas they serve.

Space Research

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of Her Majesty's Government's stance at the recent Hague meeting of the European Space Agency and the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Hermes project, he will make a statement on his plans for unilateral initiatives in this field and for the promotion of the United Kingdom space research effort.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We declined to join the Hermes programme because we were not satisfied that there were adequate industrial, economic, commercial or scientific benefits to justify the considerable expenditure involved. We are studying and evaluating proposals for the next generation of space launchers, including re-usable spaceplanes such as Hotol.

Industry (Revitalisation)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received concerning his plans for revitalising industry in inner city areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am regularly in touch with those who share our commitment to revitalise industry in inner city areas. We are continuing to develop measures, including the Government's inner cities initiative, to target assistance more effectively on the problems of the inner city, including the problems of industry in these areas.

London Underground

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he is giving to referring the London Underground to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will detail the evidence on levels of service and standards which have led him to consider this action.

Mr. Maude: I announced this reference on 7 September. It is part of the rolling programme of references of nationalised industries to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and is the first reference of the London Underground. The last reference involving London Regional Transport was made in 1983 and related to the maintenance of London Transport buses.

Tobacco (Shop Closures)

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to how many independent shops retailing tobacco have closed in the last full year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not available.

Textiles

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the growth of textile imports for each year since 1977.

Mr. Atkins: Details of imports of textiles for each year since 1977 are contained in the following table:

Imports of textiles 1977 to 1986

£ million

	Division		
	26	*65*	*Total*
1977	461·3	1,129·7	1,591·0
1978	480·0	1,453·9	1,933·9
1979	475·5	1,691·1	2,166·6
1980	376·1	1,543·7	1,919·8
1981	376·0	1,761·6	2,137·6
1982	410·8	1,927·6	2,338·4
1983	475·9	2,320·2	2,796·1
1984	596·7	2,705·4	3,302·1
1985	662·8	3,032·0	3,694·8
1986	546·9	3,162·6	3,709·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
1. Textiles defined as Divisions 26 and 65 of the Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC R2) (introduced 1978).
2. 1977 figures re-calculated on SITC R2 basis.
3. Figure for 1986 provisional.
4. Imports cif.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the growth of the textile industry's production for each year since 1975.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

Textiles (SIC class 43)

	Index of production (1980 = 100)	*Growth (percentage change on previous year)*
1975	125·6	..
1976	129·5	+3
1977	130·6	+1
1978	126·1	−3
1979	121·0	−4
1980	100·0	−17
1981	91·8	−8
1982	89·6	−2
1983	91·6	+2
1984	94·1	+3
1985	98·3	+4
1986	98·8	+1

Patent Office

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to relocate the Patent Office to Cardiff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am actively considering the relocation of the Patent Office outside London in order to reduce the very high costs of office accommodation and the other problems of a central London location. My Department has an established and successful contact with Cardiff where the Companies Registration Office is already located. I have therefore asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to give Welsh Office assistance to my officials and the Property Services Agency in finding and considering suitable accommodation in or near Cardiff. I have not yet taken any final decision on the relocation of the office anywhere.

Joint Ventures (Soviet Union)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if Her Majesty's Government are in favour of British companies responding to the call by the Soviet

Government to set up joint ventures in the Soviet Union; what assistance the Department of Trade and Industry is providing; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of British companies which *(a)* have entered into joint ventures in the Soviet Union and *(b)* are currently negotiating such joint ventures.

Mr. Atkins: Whether it is in the interest of British companies to enter into joint ventures in the Soviet Union is entirely a matter for the commercial judgment of individual companies. My Department and the commercial department of the British Embassy in Moscow maintain close contact with companies known to be interested in joint ventures to advise them of latest developments with regard to their establishment. So far, only about 20 joint ventures have been approved by the Soviet authorities, none as yet with British companies. Many British companies have however submitted proposals and some are at an advanced stage of negotiation. For reasons of commerical confidentiality, it is not appropriate for me to list interested companies.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many cases of insider dealing in the last 12 months have been brought to the notice of the Department of Trade and Industry; how many of such cases have resulted in prosecutions; and how many of such prosecutions have resulted in convictions.

Mr. Maude: In the last 12 months, 25 cases of possible insider dealing have been considered for investigation. None of these has yet resulted in a prosecution. However, two cases referred to my Department in November 1986 have resulted in prosecutions and convictions, and two more cases referred in 1986 are now the subject of criminal proceedings. Ten cases are currently being investigated under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986. A further 11 cases are currently being considered for investigation.

SCOTLAND

"Prosecuting Sexual Assault"

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he intends to act on the recommendations made in the Scottish Home and Health Department's report "Prosecuting Sexual Assault";

(2) if he has received representations from Scottish rape crisis centres on the Scottish Home and Health Department's report "Prosecuting Sexual Assault"; and if he will make a statement on the recommendations made in that report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on 26 October 1987 at column *144*.

Prisoners

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the weekly cost of maintaining a prisoner in each of Scotland's prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available figures are for 1986-87 and are as follows:

Approximate gross weekly cost per inmate

Establishment	£
Aberdeen	190
Barlinnie	140
Castle Huntly	220
Cornton Vale	310
Dumfries	240
Dungavel	190
Edinburgh	190
Friarton	280
Glenochil	260
Greenock	240
Inverness	260
Longriggend	170
Low Moss	140
Noranside	300
Penninghame	200
Perth	190
Peterhead	560
Polmont	220
Shotts	550

The figures include transfer value of supplies drawn by establishments from central stores and prisons industries as well as the direct revenue costs of each establishment.

Domiciliary Consultations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the cost of domiciliary consultations in 1986-87, and in the light of the criticism by general practitioners of its alleged abuse by hospital consultants, he will review the need for such consultations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have not received any criticisms from general practitioners alleging abuse of the domiciliary consultation procedure by hospital consultants.

NHS Consultants (Merit Awards)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of merit awards to National Health Service consultants in Scotland in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Precise information on the cost of distinction and merit awards to NHS consultants is not held centrally. Taking account of abatement for those holding part-time contracts, it is estimated that some £6 million would have been paid to NHS staff.

Family Planning

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were registered with general practitioners for National Health Service contraceptive services in 1986 in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: 270,797.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioners are registered to provide a National Health Service family planning service to their patients in Scotland; and how many premises are involved.

Mr. Rifkind: At 1 October 1986, the latest date for which this information is available, 3,232 general practitioners were in contract with health boards to provide contraceptive service to their patients. Information on the number of premises involved is not centrally available.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the total cost of the general practitioner provision for National Health Service family planning services to patients for 1986 in Scotland;

(2) what was the total cost of the general practitioner provision for National Health Service family planning services to patients for 1986 in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: In the year ended 31 March 1987, the cost was £2,830,392.

Sentencing Options

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has proposals substantially to increase the range and quality of sentencing options available to the courts for the 16 to 21 years of age group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to extend the existing wide range of sentencing options available to the courts.

Rating Reform

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet come to a decision as to the definition of the term full-time student for the purposes of section 8(6) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 1987.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly bring forward draft regulations under section 8(6) of the 1987 Act incorporating the necessary definitions.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Rifkind: Scottish Office supplies of stationery are obtained from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, which works closely both with the industry and the Department of Trade and Industry in relation to possibilities for greater use of recycled paper. I understand that the general purpose paper which Her Majesty's Stationery Office supply may contain an element of recycled waste when purchased in accordance with the conditions and specifications of Her Majesty's Stationery Office contracts.

Envelopes and demand slips for internal use in the Scottish Office are made from recycled paper.

Certain categories of waste paper from the Scottish Office are uplifted by a contractor for recycling.

Students

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, with regard to the student grants paid by the Scottish Education Department, at what percentage rate the threshold at which parental contribution becomes payable has risen each year since 1979; and what has been the comparable change in *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* average pay increases in each such year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table. The percentage increases for the retail prices index and average pay are based on financial years and those for the parental contribution threshold on the equivalent academic year.

Percentage increase in:	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Parental contribution threshold	23·4	13·8	Nil	7·6	7·0	6·6	7·4	6·9
Retail price index	21·8	12·0	9·4	4·0	5·2	6·9	3·0	4·2
Average pay[1] (all adults)	21·5	14·9	9·3	8·8	8·0	6·5	6·5	6·4

[1] *Source:* Department of Employment New Earnings.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many full-time students in higher education receive fees-only grants from the Scottish Education Department *(a)* in Glasgow university, *(b)* in Strathclyde university, *(c)* in Glasgow college of technology and *(d)* in Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available figures for full-time students in receipt of fees only awards are in respect of session 1986-87. The information requested is as follows:

	Number
Glasgow University	1,948
Strathclyde University	1,286
Glasgow College of Technology	539
Scotland	13,167

Peterhead Prison

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last visited Peterhead prison; and when he next intends to visit Peterhead prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend was scheduled to visit Peterhead prison on 29 September 1987, but the visit had to be cancelled because of the continuation of a major incident which had started the previous evening. He last visited the prison, in his then capacity of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, on 22 August 1979. He has no immediate plans to make a further visit.

SSHA Houses

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the outstanding debt charge for Scottish Special Housing Association homes; and what proportion of the average rent is charged as a revenue consequence of those debt charges.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The association's outstanding loan debt was £571·5 million at 31 March 1987. Average rent is set by the association in the light of overall expected revenue expenditure, including loan charges, and taking account of Government subsidy. In

1986-87, expenditure on loan charges was equivalent to 92 per cent. of rental income, or 67 per cent. of total revenue income.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of Scottish Special Housing Association houses in each district council area in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Region and District Council	*Houses owned (at 31 March 1987)*
Borders	
Berwickshire	6
Ettrick and Lauderdale	780
Roxburgh	917
Tweeddale	224
Central	
Clackmannan	1,749
Falkirk	2,954
Stirling	453
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	128
Nithsdale	476
Stewartry	19
Wigtown	—
Fife	
Dunfermline	3,790
Kirkcaldy	2,295
North East Fife	—
Grampian	
City of Aberdeen	2,299
Banff and Buchan	697
Gordon	234
Kincardine and Deeside	358
Moray	332
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	—
Caithness	200
Inverness	1,215
Lochaber	287
Nairn	131
Ross and Cromarty	430
Skye and Lochalsh	—
Sutherland	—
Orkney Islands Council	—
Lothian	
City of Edinburgh	1,925
East Lothian	1,138
Midlothian	3,507
West Lothian	3,228
Shetland Islands Council	145
Strathclyde	
City of Glasgow	16,695
Argyll and Bute	369
Bearsden and Milngavie	70
Clydebank	3,014
Clydesdale	1,193
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	76
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,179
Cunninghame	2,729
Dumbarton	2,051
East Kilbride	—
Eastwood	22
Hamilton	1,576
Inverclyde	3,227
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	1,940
Kyle and Carrick	1,242
Monklands	1,350
Motherwell	1,945
Renfrew	7,284
Strathkelvin	798
Tayside	
City of Dundee	3,531
Angus	1,909
Perth and Kinross	214
Western Isles Islands Council	28
TOTAL	83,359

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those financial institutions or housing associations which have expressed an interest in buying Scottish Special Housing Association houses in the event of enactment of the proposals in "Scottish Homes".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A number of financial institutions and housing associations have expressed interest in participating in the new opportunities for improving housing choice and conditions which our proposal for the development of housing policy offer. Those expressions of interest are not dependent on the establishment of Scottish Homes nor are they confined to specific proposals involving houses presently owned by the Scottish Special Housing Association. Possibilities for changes in the ownership of those houses will involve consultation with the tenants who occupy them. Those interested in offering tenants the opportunity of a change in their renting arrangements will no doubt approach them in due course.

Health Service Unions

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that health service unions will be consulted by his Department in relation to the Government's proposals "Promoting Better Health".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Copies of the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249), published on 25 November, have been sent to a large number of bodies including the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the British Medical Association and the British Dental Association. The Government now intend to enter into discussions with representatives of the professions and with health boards about the White Paper's proposals.

Rating Reform

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the £100,000 to be spent on the poll tax information campaign.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) of 1 December.

Police Officers (Complaints)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints were lodged against Scottish police

officers in each year since 1979; and of those *(a)* how many were withdrawn, *(b)* how many were upheld, *(c)* how many were rejected, and *(d)* how many prosecutions were brought against police officers as a result of a complaint.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of the information held centrally about complaints against the police are contained in chapter II and table 11 of the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, copies of which are in the Library.

Eels

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce measures to conserve the stock of eels in Scottish lochs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no plans to introduce measures to conserve the stocks of eels in Scottish waters. Eels in Scottish inland waters are classified as fresh water fish and may be netted or trapped by the proprietor or occupier of the fishing right.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to how many companies are registered for eel fishing in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. No special licence is required to fish for eels in Scottish inland waters. Accordingly, if the company concerned is the proprietor or occupier of the fishing right there is nothing to prevent it from exercising its lawful right.

Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to bring forward legislation arising from the White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Shortly.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many representatives elected by charities and other housing agencies will be members of the board of Scottish Homes;

(2) how many elected representatives of the Scottish local authorities will be members of the board of Scottish Homes;

(3) how many elected representatives of tenants' associations of the public and private sectors will be members of the board of Scottish Homes;

(4) how many elected representatives of the Scottish housing associations will be members of the board of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the White Paper, "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland" (Cm. 242). Paragraph 2.17 explains the Government's intentions in relation to the composition of the board of Scottish Homes.

Prisons (Reform)

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce reform into Scottish prisons following the recent outbreaks of violence at Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1987]:* My right hon. and learned Friend is currently assessing the implications of recent incidents in Scottish prisons. The Government has taken major steps to improve the operation of the Scottish prison service in recent months. The problem of overcrowding has been greatly eased this year by the availability of 350 extra places in new accommodation at Shotts prison and by the change of use of four penal establishments to transfer under-utilised places from the young offender system to adult prisons.

On 1 November new arrangements, under "Fresh Start", for staff attendance, working practices and management structures were introduced. These will make it possible to develop more flexible and effective local patterns of working.

Plans are at an advanced stage for new approaches to regimes and improved staff training to take advantage of the major initiatives which are already under way.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce reform in Scottish prisons following the recent outbreaks of violence at Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[pursuant to his reply, 18 November 1987, c. 559]:* My right hon. and learned Friend is currently assessing the implications of recent incident in Scottish prisons. The Government have taken major steps to improve the operation of the Scottish prison service in recent months. The problem of overcrowding has been greatly eased this year by the availability of 350 extra places in new accommodation at Shotts prison and by the change of use of 4 penal establishments to transfer under-utilised places from the young offender system to adult prisons.

On 1 November, new arrangements under "Fresh Start", for staff attendance, working practices and management structures were introduced. These will make it possible to develop more flexible and effective local patterns of working.

Plans are at an advanced stage for new approaches to regimes and improved staff training to take advantage of the major initiatives which are already under way.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables listing his Department's expenditure since 1979-80 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in constant 1986-87 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of the United Kingdom planning total; and if he will publish similar tables for the years 1988-89 to 1990-91 based on the public expenditure plans contained in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* The information is given in the table. Column *(d)* shows the ratio of Scottish "block" services to comparable expenditure in England, and is more meaningful than column *(c)* as the United Kingdom planning total includes expenditure in Scotland on services, for example

defence and social security, which are not included in my right hon. and learned Friend's responsibilities. The figure for 1990-91 in column *(d)* is not available pending decisions on individual programmes.

Scotland programme in cash terms, constant 1986-87 prices and as a percentage of total United Kingdom public expenditure

	(a) Cash	*(b)* Constant prices	*(c)* (a) as a percentage of the United Kingdom planning total	*(d)* Block services as a percentage of comparable services in England
1979-80	4,552	7,577	5·9	14·4
1980-81	5,383	7,588	5·9	14·4
1981-82	5,841	7,469	5·6	14·9
1982-83	6,235	7,438	5·4	14·7
1983-84	6,701	7,642	5·5	14·5
1984-85	7,049	7,700	5·6	14·0
1985-86	7,225	7,443	5·4	14·5
1986-87	7,805	7,805	5·6	14·7
1987-88	7,961	7,636	5·4	14·7
1988-89	8,510	7,810	5·4	14·7
1989-90	8,600	7,630	5·1	14·4
1990-91	8,770	7,550	5·0	—

Nuclear Accidents (Monitoring)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals or representations he has received regarding a programme of systematic whole body monitoring of people in the areas affected by Chernobyl fallout to replace the voluntary programme presently undertaken by the Scottish universities research and reactor centre at East Kilbride; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[pursuant to his reply, 21 October 1987, c. 774]:* The whole body monitoring being undertaken by the Scottish universities research and reactor centre is part of a national programme funded by the Government. Many Scots, including those from areas particularly affected by the Chernobyl fallout, have been monitored, and I understand that the current programme at the centre is likely to be continued to provide further information on the decreasing caesium levels in the body. However, the results of monitoring to date, together with evidence from the very substantial monitoring of foodstuffs and other materials, does not suggest a need for an extended programme of wholebody monitoring in Scotland.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Foreign Currency

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will review the arrangements for providing exchange risk cover for official borrowing in foreign currency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The terms of the exchange cover scheme for official foreign currency borrowing have been reviewed in the light of this year's substantial increase in the United Kingdom's foreign currency reserves. My right hon. Friend has decided that exchange cover should continue to be provided only for official foreign currency loans of $25 million equivalent or above and that the interest rate benefit of ½ per cent. currently available to those who borrow under the scheme should now be withdrawn. The $25 million limit will not apply to loans associated with grants from the European Community. Certain other minor changes have also been made in the scheme. Nationalised industries, local authorities and others are being informed of the details.

Scottish Oil Fund

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to establish a Scottish oil fund to encourage industrial enterprise in Scotland.

Mr. Lilley: No.

Manufactured Exports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the oral reply of 26 November, *Official Report*, column 365, what has been the figure for the United Kingdom's manufactured exports for each year since 1975.

Mr. Major: The information, from 1978 onwards, is available in table B7 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics," November edition. Figures for earlier years can be found in the annual supplement No. 8 of this publication. Copies are in the Library.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, similar to table 13 on page 61 of the current edition of "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom", showing taxes and royalties attributable to United Kingdom and United Kingdom continental shelf oil and gas, at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* Information on 1987-88 price levels is not yet available so the figures on tax and royalty revenues attributable to United Kingdom and United Kingdom continental shelf oil and gas production have been converted to 1986-87 prices, using the GDP (market prices) deflator. The figures are as follows:

£ million, 1986-87 prices

	Total revenues	Royalty	Supplementary petroleum duty	Petroleum revenue tax[1]	Corporation tax: Before ACT set-off	Corporation tax: ACT set-off	Corporation tax: Mainstream CT
1977-78	512	491	—	—	21	—	21
1978-79	1,099	562	—	356	181	78	103
1979-80	3,850	1,045	—	2,388	416	130	286
1980-81	5,255	1,393	—	3,383	479	136	343
1981-82	8,296	1,784	2,588	3,054	870	345	525
1982-83	9,331	1,947	2,857	3,906	621	241	380
1983-84	10,034	2,172	—	6,862	1,000	490	510
1984-85	13,131	2,649	—	7,835	2,647	1,350	1,297
1985-86	11,681	2,118	—	6,565	2,998	1,112	1,886
1986-87	4,798	918	—	1,188	2,692	1,130	1,562

[1] Including advance payments.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

13. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* individuals, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* voluntary organisations have submitted comments to him in respect of Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Chope: Of the 1,217 responses received before the end of the consultation period on 31 October 1986, 479 were from private individuals, 268 were from principal local authorities, and 14 from voluntary organisations.

22. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to publish a White Paper on rates reform.

Mr. Chope: The Government's proposals for reforming the rating system were set out in a Green Paper published in January 1986. Consultation on the proposals ran until October of last year. We propose to introduce the necessary legislation shortly.

28. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has now received to date to his consultation document "The Community Charge".

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 4 November at column *928*.

45. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Leicester city council concerning the implementation of the proposed poll tax.

Mr. Howard: Leicester city council responded to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" but has made no specific representations on the implementation of the community charge.

46. **Mr. Jim Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to introduce the community charge legislation.

51. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to introduce legislation on the community charge and uniform business rate.

Mr. Howard: Shortly.

47. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of letters which his Department has now received about the proposed poll tax, and the number of letters critical of the tax.

53. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has now received about the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: A summary of the 1,271 responses received by the Department before 31 October 1986, when the consultation period on the Green Paper ended, was placed in the Library on 15 December last. Since June 1987, the Department has received more than 3,500 letters commenting on specific aspects of our proposals or requesting further information.

55. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the observations of the National Council for Civil Liberties on the proposed community charge.

Mr. Howard: None, since the NCCL's report was not sent to me.

65. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the proportion of local government income which will be levied locally after the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: We have received a number of representations from those who are concerned that percentage changes in community charges will be disproportionate to percentage changes in expenditure. Our proposals for the way in which grant and non-domestic rates will be paid address this concern and will ensure that when the scheme is fully implemented, local authorities' gross community charges will increase in line with increases in expenditure in both cash and percentage terms.

76. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations regarding the imposition of the poll tax from Dulwich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information on responses to the Green Paper received during the consultation period were recorded by local authority area by borough in London.

Of the 1217 responses received by my Department before 31 October 1986 when the consultation period on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) ended, four were from respondents then resident in the London borough of Southwark.

80. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from voluntary organisations in respect of the proposed community charge.

Mr. Howard: We have received representations from a number of voluntary organisations, about the community charge, in response to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), (in respect of which a summary of responses was placed in the Library on 15 December 1986) and subsequently.

86. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings have taken place between his officials and representatives of voluntary organisations to discuss the proposed community charge.

Mr. Howard: Officials have met representatives of The National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Salvation Army, Women's Aid Federation England and Welsh Women's Aid.

88. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many recent representations he has received on the uniform business rate.

Mr. Howard: I continue to receive representations on all aspects of our proposals for reform of the rating system.

93. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of poll tax register changes per annum which will be required in England and Wales.

Mr. Howard: Surveys indicate that about 15 per cent. of registered electors change addresses each year, while a sample of local authorities suggests that up to 20 per cent. of rate bills are subject to such changes. While more individuals will appear on community charge registers than on rating rolls, I would not expect a large increase in the proportion of entries requiring change.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, following his revised proposals for the introduction of the poll tax, which he announced on 17 November, he will say *(a)* what will be the average poll tax bill for claimants of income support (including any dependants) in the year 1994-95, assuming that real local authority expenditure levels and the number of income support claimants remain constant at 1988-89 levels *(b)* what will be the average poll tax bill for claimants of income support, including any dependants, in the year 1994-5 on the same assumptions, in each region of the United Kingdom, *(c)* what will be the average poll tax bill for claimants, including any dependants, in receipt of housing benefit and not in receipt of income support in the year 1994-95, on the same assumptions, and *(d)* what will be the average poll tax bill for claimants, including any dependants, in receipt of housing benefit and not in receipt of income support in the year 1994-95, on the same assumptions, in each region of the United Kingdom;

(2) if, following his revised proposals for the poll tax announced on 17 November, he will indicate *(a)* what proportion of adults in each region of the United Kingdom are in families (i) expected to be in receipt of income support from April 1988 and (ii) expected to be in receipt of housing benefit from April 1988, *(b)* whether claimants of income support will continue to be entitled to rebates of at least 80 per cent. of their poll tax bills, at least until the transition to the poll tax is completed, in 1994-95, and *(c)* whether applicable amounts, on the basis of which income support and poll tax rebates will be calculated (i) up-rated in line with the retail prices index at least until 1994-95, and (ii) including an amount equal to 20 per cent. of the average poll tax bill for claimants on income support for as long as such claimants are liable for 20 per cent. of their poll tax bills.

Mr. Howard: All recipients of income support will be entitled to 80 per cent. community charge rebates. If the new system had been fully in force in 1987-88, the average community charge bill would have been £224; the average amount paid by income support recipients would therefore have been £45. The average for each region, on the same assumptions, would be:

	£	£
Northern region	256	51
Yorkshire and Humberside	233	47
North West	233	45
East Midlands	206	41
West Midlands	183	37
East Anglia	172	34
Greater London	348	70
South East	184	37
South West	186	37

Estimates for 1988-89 are not available. Those receiving housing benefit, but not income support, will receive rebates of up to 80 per cent. of the community charge.

The number of adults in each region expected to be in receipt of income support from April 1988 and the number of adults in each region expected to be in receipt of housing benefit from April 1988 are not available. The level of applicable amounts in 1994 will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services at the appropriate time.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has completed his consideration of the measures that may be necessary to ensure that the community charges register cannot be used to track down political refugees and battered wives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: A number of representations have been made by women's aid groups and on behalf of political refugees, expressing concern that the community charges register could be used to track down political refugees and battered wives.

Following recent discussions between officials from this Department and the Welsh Office, and representatives of Women's Aid Federation England and Welsh Women's Aid; we have decided to take steps to protect the confidentiality of people at risk, to enable them to register for the community charge without making public their names and addresses.

Community charges registration officers will be required to omit from the published version of the register the name of any individual who satisfies them that he or she may suffer physical injury if his or her name is listed. In cases where this would result in an address being listed with no corresponding name, the address will also be omitted, thus ensuring that attention is not drawn to properties where people at risk are resident.

This is a move which should be welcomed by women's aid groups and by political refugees. It will enable people

who live under the threat of violence to meet their obligation to register for the community charge, safe in the knowledge that there is no risk involved.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce details of the poll tax rebate system.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply. We hope to publish draft community charge rebate regulations in the spring or early summer of 1988, following consultations with the local authority associations.

Homelessness

19. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *1126-28*, what progress has been made with the Government's proposals for dealing with the problem of homelessness in London; and if he will make a statement.

59. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has for dealing with the problem of homelessness in England and Wales.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

33. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Government-owned properties are leased to local authorities for use as accommodation for the homeless; and what steps he is taking to increase this number.

Mr. Chope: 276 properties amongst those for which my right hon. Friend has responsibility are temporarily let to local authorities to meet housing needs.

Excluding property being sold, 6·5 per cent. of the housing stock for which my right hon. Friend is responsible has remained empty for six months. This includes dwellings undergoing renovation.

My right hon. Friend's policy is to sell property which is surplus to Government requirements, usually on the open market.

57. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of homeless people currently being housed by local authorities in England.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the second quarter of 1987, local authorities in England accepted responsibility for securing accommodation (not necessarily in council-owned property) for an estimated 26,440 households, under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act.

66. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to bring council properties that are empty and awaiting sale into use for homeless people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Circular 12/85 advises local authorities on the temporary use of property by homeless people.

Housing Associations (Finance)

25. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Housing Corporation to discuss private finance for housing associations.

Mr. Waldegrave: I met the chairman and the chief executive of the Housing Corporation on 26 October to discuss various issues, including the use of private finance by housing associations.

Acid Rain

26. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research Her Majesty's Government are funding to ascertain the effects of acid deposition on crops and buildings; and what funds his Department is providing for this research.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government fund an extensive programme of reseach in these two areas. A total of about £870,000 pa is being spent at present, of which the Department provides about £750,000.

Nirex

27. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of Nirex; and what matters he expects to discuss.

64. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

72. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to meet representatives of Nirex.

37. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next hopes to meet the chairman of Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn).

92. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next hopes to meet the chairman of Nirex; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn).

Sports Council

29. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is next to meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss current issues facing sport.

Mr. Moynihan: I meet regularly the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss issues relating to the development of sport. I last met him on 3 November and I expect to see him again shortly.

Drug Abuse (Sport)

30. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is taking any new initiatives to curb drug abuse in sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I and Sebastian Coe, vice-chairman of the Sports Council, carried out a review of drug abuse in sport this summer. Our report was endorsed by the ministerial group on the misuse of drugs and by the Sports Council. As a result, the council plans to have a revised, independent testing regime in place by 1 April 1988. I welcome the council's speedy response to our report.

Drug abuse in sport is an international problem. I am pursuing the need for international co-operation with Sports Ministers and a number of international bodies of sport. I am encouraged by the positive attitude they are adopting.

Voters (Statistics)

31. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the proportion of registered voters who are registered as the official ratepayer or head of household for rating purposes; what is the proportion of registered ratepayers who are women; and what is the proportion of registered voters who are women.

Mr. Howard: Neither the electoral registers nor local authority rate rolls contain this information. It is known that in 1986, out of an adult population of 36·2 million in England, 18·9 million (52 per cent.) were women and it is therefore likely that out of the 35 million persons registered to vote some 18 million would be women. It is further known that of 17·9 million households in England, 4·6 million were headed by women though households need not equate with domestic hereditament and not all householders pay rates.

Planning Zones

32. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response there has been by local authorities to the concept of simplified planning zones.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 23 November, at column *530*, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

Government-owned Property

34. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing stock owned by Government Departments has been empty for more than six months.

48. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that properties owned by Government Departments which have been empty for more than six months can be used for housing instead of being sold on the open market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

Water Quality

35. **Mr. Win Griffiths** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when full compliance with the two EC directives on the quality of water, including the ending of all derogations granted by the Commission, will be achieved.

Mr. Moynihan: Most public water supplies for which derogations have been sought from the European Commission are expected to comply with the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption by 1990. Improvements are also being made or are planned for most supplies where derogations have been given by my right hon. Friend.

Severn-Trent Water Authority

36. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to visit the headquarters of the Severn-Trent water authority to discuss water privatisation and the National River Authority.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth).

House Price Inflation

38. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for dealing with the differential rate of house price inflation throughout the United Kingdom;

62. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for dealing with house price inflation.

71. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for dealing with house price inflation in the south-east of England.

Mr. Waldegrave: I would refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) to the Hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 4 November at column *736*.

Housing Policy

39. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had to his White paper on housing policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received a large number of comments on the White Paper on housing and the associated consultation and explanatory documents issued by the Department. These comments have come from the local authority associations, a number of individual local authorities, and various organisations and individuals with an interest in housing. We are considering very carefully all the points that respondents have made.

Enterprise Zones

40. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total cost, including the loss of rate fund compensation of enterprise zones for the period since the introduction of these zones until the zone-free period has expired.

Mr. Trippier: The three principal components of the cost of the EZ experiment are: grant paid to local authorities in respect of rate revenue foregone from

properties on the zones; tax revenue forgone in the form of tax allowances for expenditure by developers on construction of commercial and industrial properties there; and public sector investment attributable to the zones. The final cost will therefore depend upon when development occurs and the extent of that development. In the nature of the EZ experiment, this cannot be predicted; nor is it possible to predict the effect of the introduction of the uniform business rate on the final cost. No estimate of what that cost might be has therefore been made.

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many enterprise zones have been established to date; and whether he intends to establish any further areas.

Mr. Trippier: Twenty-five enterprise zones have been established in the United Kingdom to date. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to designate further zones.

Water Charges

41. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how charges for water services will be applied after the abolition of domestic taxes to those properties where meters have not been installed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Water undertakers will decide themselves what basis of charges they will adopt. These will have to comply with the principles of section 30 of the Water Act 1973 that charges must have regard to costs and not show any undue preference to or discrimination against any class of persons. I understand that the water industry is currently studying a number of options for charging for water services once domestic rateable values are abolished and I expect to receive their conclusions shortly.

"The Way Forward"

42. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received as a result of the publication of the Nirex discussion document "The Way Forward."

Mr. Moynihan: None. I would expect any representations about Nirex's discussion document "The Way Forward" to be sent directly to Nirex.

49. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has met the chairman of Nirex to discuss its consultation document published on 12 November, "The Way Forward."

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of Nirex on 22 October, when the subject of the document formed part of a wide-ranging discussion about radioactive waste.

Housing Policy, Hackney

43. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will pay an official visit to Hackney to discuss housing policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any plans to do so. Members and officers of Hackney LBC visited my Department on 5 October to discuss the borough's housing investment programme allocaton for 1988-89.

Inner-City Areas (Development Grants)

44. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the grants now available from his Department to private developers wishing to develop in inner-city areas.

Mr. Trippier: The following grants are available to private developers in England wishing to develop in inner-cities:

urban development grant
urban regeneration grant
derelict land grant

Assistance is also provided through the operation of 17 enterprise zones, six urban development corporations, the urban programme and land registers.

Storm Damage (Tree Replacement)

50. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to replace the trees lost in the gale of 15 and 16 October with trees of similar character appropriate to the local environment.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend announced on October 21 special help for the replacement of amenity trees lost in the storm. The Countryside Commission has set up a special unit, Task Force Trees, to pay grants for this purpose and provide advice. Preliminary grant allocations to local authorities were announced on November 24. The commission's aim is to bring about, not only reinstatement, but where possible improvement, with preference given to native hardwood species.

Urban Development Corporations

52. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the location of the first group of mini urban development corporations; and how much Government funding will go to each location.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran).

Homeless Children

54. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of homeless children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: At 30 June 1987 there were 10,870 households temporarily placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation by English local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. Information on the number of children in these households is not collected by the Department.

Teesside (Derelict Areas)

56. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made by the Teesside urban development corporation in clearing and developing derelict areas in Teesside.

Mr. Trippier: Excellent progress is being made in attracting new investment into Teesside. A major redevelopment of the former Smith's dock shipyard was

announced during the Prime Minister's visit in September. Other schemes already in the pipeline include a leisure and commercial complex at Stockton racecourse, a marina at Hartlepool south docks, and developments at Bowesfield park, Belasis park and the former Acklam steelworks.

Darlington (Expenditure)

58. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what percentage Darlington borough council's annual expenditure has changed since 1979.

Mr. Howard: Darlington borough council's net current expenditure has increases by 163 per cent. in cash terms between 1978-79 and 1986-87. This represents an increase of 35 per cent. after taking account of inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Storm Damage

60. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the storm damage incurred by local authorities in October.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave on 19 November at column *669*.

73. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in response to his departmental letter of 23 October detailing special financial assistance for storm damage.

Mr. Chope: I have received numerous representations from local authorities about the special financial assistance scheme for storm damage.

78. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any further proposals in respect of assisting local authorities to meet the cost of the October storms; and if he will make a statement.

79. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in compensating local authorities for the recent storm damage.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has already announced details of the scheme of special financial assistance that is being made available to local authorities, and has made clear that we will interpret claims reasonably and flexibly. My Department has now issued a claim form and guidance to local authorities for use in requesting special financial assistance and additional capital allocations this year. A copy has been placed in the Library. Claims under the scheme must be with the Department by 31 January 1988.

Local Authorities (Improvement and Repair Programmes)

61. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase central Government subsidies to local authorities in respect of their improvement and repair programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no current plans to increase central government subsidies to local authorities for the improvement and repair of their own housing stock as these are included in the housing subsidy system which is intended to meet any deficit on housing expenditure which an authority cannot finance out of their own resources. The Department's proposals for a reformed system of grants to householders for repair and improvement and the appropriate levels of Exchequer contribution to local authorities are set out in the consultation paper: "Home Improvement Policy" which was published on 5 November 1987, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Housing Associations

63. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the National Federation of Housing Associations to discuss the role of housing associations following his White Paper on housing policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I met the chairman and the director of the National Federation of Housing Associations on 19 October to discuss a range of issues affecting housing associations arising from the White Paper "Housing: The Government"s Proposals', and the Department's consultation paper on finance for housing associations.

Housing Action Trusts

67. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what areas are currently being considered for housing action trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is too early for my right hon. Friend to make any statement about areas in which he may propose to establish housing action trusts. It is expected that HATs will be established in London and elsewhere.

Council House Sales

68. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any new proposals to allow local authorities to use the receipts from council house sales to finance the building of new council homes.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on 6 November at column *735*.

77. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will allow balances from the sale of council houses to be used, by mutual agreement, by housing associations and trusts for the building of new low-cost homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Authorities may already use their housing investment programme allocations or the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts to make loans or grants to housing associations. The future use of capital receipts from the sale of council houses will be discussed in the Government's forthcoming consultation paper on a new financial regime for local authority housing.

82. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: From April 1979 to June 1987, about 811,000 tenants bought their houses from English local authorities and new towns.

87. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many right-to-buy applications

have been received by the London borough of Waltham Forest since 1 April 1986; and how many council dwellings have been sold since that date.

Mr. Waldegrave: The London borough of Waltham Forest has not submitted a return of right-to-buy applications or of council house sales in the period from April 1986.

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many right-to-buy applications have been received by the London borough of Islington since the Housing Act 1980 came into effect; and how many council dwellings have been sold accordingly.

Mr. Waldegrave: The borough of Islington reported 4,915 applications for the right to buy and 921 sales completed in the period up to the end of June 1987.

Water Rates

69. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he expects water rates to increase in the next financial year.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend expects to announce shortly the external finance limits and the financial targets for each water authority. It will then be for individual authorities to finalise their budgets and take their own decisions on the details of their charges.

Derelict Land Grant

74. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much Government funding has been contributed to the derelict land grant in each of the last three years; and how much vacant or derelict land in public ownership has been sold as a result.

Mr. Trippier: The resources provided for derelict land grant in the last three years have been as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	75·03
1985-86	82·78
1986-87	83·13

In these three years a total of nearly 3,500 hectares of derelict land has been reclaimed with the aid of derelict land grant. Figures are not available to show the amount of land in public ownership which has been sold following grant-aided reclamation. However a total of 27,000 acres of land was removed from the registers of unused land and underused land owned by public bodies in the period January 1985 to October 1987 because the land had been sold. It is not known how much, if any, of this land had previously been derelict, and reclaimed using derelict land grant.

Housebuilding

75. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the current level of housebuilding starts.

Mr. Waldegrave: Provisional figures for January to September of this year showed that total housebuilding starts in England were about 6,000 more than in the same period of last year. Private housebuilding starts this year have been the highest recorded in the first three quarters of any year since 1973.

Assured Tenancies

81. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of assured tenancies that have been created under the Housing Act 1980 and the Housing and Planning Act 1986; and of those how many are sheltered housing or flats.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of assured tenancies at 1 April 1987 was 2,998. A substantial proportion of these is thought to be of sheltered accommodation, but the exact figure is not available.

Planning Applications (London)

83. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the workings of the appeal system for planning applications in the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's response to the Fifth Report from the Environment Committee, Planning: Appeals, Call-In and Major Public Inquiries, (Cm. 43) of December 1986 sets out the action which is being taken to improve the operation of the planning appeals system following detailed management reviews by the Department. Progress in implementing the changes and performance is being monitored carefully.

Runcorn New Town

84. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to consult Runcorn new town tenants with regard to their wishes respecting successor landlords after the wind-up of the New Town Development Corporation.

Mrs. Roe: Before we can decide how best to canvass the views of Runcorn new town tenants about the future management of their houses, we need to know which landlords are interested in providing them with a service. We shall announce our proposals as soon as we are able.

Wetland Sites

85. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many wetland sites have been classified in the United Kingdom under the international convention.

Mr. Moynihan: I would refer my hon. Friend to the written answer I gave on 25 November to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) at columns *232-3*.

Local Authorities (Financial Prudence)

89. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to improve standards of financial prudence by local authorities.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on Tuesday 10 November at columns *110-11*. In addition to the proposals I announced then, we have already taken a number of measures, including the provisions in the Local Government Act 1987, to inhibit the use of advance and deferred purchase schemes. We will continue to keep the situation under review, and will not hesitate to take whatever steps appear necessary to restrain imprudent behaviour by local authorities. In the longer

term the new local government finance system we are proposing to establish will provide the basis for accountable and financially prudent local government.

Underground Fire, Dronfield, Derbyshire

90. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to announce his decision on the funding of action on the underground fire at Callywhite Lane, Dronfield, in Derbyshire.

Mr. Trippier: As I have told the House, it would not be appropriate to make central Government financial assistance available to help fund the remedial works necessary to put out the fire.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has considered North-East Derbyshire district council's request that unrecovered expenditure they incur in dealing with the fire should be excluded from the definition of total expenditure, and has decided not to exclude it.

Shorthold Tenancies

91. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of the shorthold tenancies created under the Housing Act 1980.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not available. Over 5,000 protected shorthold tenancies were created in England and Wales between 28 November 1980, the date on which shorthold was introduced, and 1 December 1981. Information about shortholds created since 1 December 1981 has not been collected because the compulsory rent registration requirement for new shortholds outside the Greater London area was lifted on that date under the Protected Shorthold Tenancies (Rent Registration) Order 1981.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Moynihan: Most types of paper we use contain varying proportions of re-cycled paper. Comprehensive information on waste paper is not readily available, but the waste paper from our London buildings is sent for recycling.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Envrionment if he will give the 1986 levels of production of chlorofluorocarbons for *(a)* Britain and *(b)* the European Economic Community; and what equivalent information he has for (i) the United States of America and (ii) the world as a whole.

Mr. Moynihan: Production figures for chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are not given separately for the United Kingdom or any individual member state of the European Community. Estimates of 1986 production of CFCs 11, 12, 113 and 114 are as follows:

	Kilotonnes
EC	440
United States	300
Rest of World	290

Production of CFC 115 is negligible, with world production in 1986 estimated at 15 kilotonnes.

Source: United Kingdom industry estimates.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the United Kingdom annual production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs or Freons) in 1957, 1960, 1970 and 1980; and what is his estimate for the 1990 production capacity.

Mr. Moynihan: Information about production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by individual member states of the European Community is not available. For the years in question figures for the EC as a whole are available only for 1980 when production of CFCs 11 and 12 was estimated at 296 kilotonnes. (Source European Council of Chemical Manufacturers' Federations: CEFIC). 1980 production figures for other CFCs and estimates of production capacity for 1990 are not available.

Housing (Repairs)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department gives to local authorities regarding the type of repairs which are the responsibility of the tenant and of the local authority, respectively.

Mrs. Roe: None. Local authorities' repairing obligations are specified in sections 8 and 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Tenants have no statutory responsibility for repairs.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be reviewing the legal framework appropriate to the identification and recording of contaminated land; and if he will consider the introduction of statutory registers for the recording of such land.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government indicated in their response to the 11th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution ("Managing Waste: The Duty of Care") that it was considering the feasibility of identifying contaminated land by means of land registers. Consideration of this complex issue has not yet been completed; registers of such land remain a possibility.

Drinking Water

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why, in view of the exclusion of toxic and microbiological parameters from derogation provisions of European Community directive 80/778/EEC relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (Article 9), he has granted derogations for both faecal coliform and total coliform bacterial contamination of public drinking water supplies.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has not granted any derogations under article 9 of EC directive 80/778/EEC for faecal coliform or total coliform bacterial contamination of public water supplies.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a system to record the

types of hazardous waste imported into the United Kingdom and to record the sources of the hazardous waste.

Mr. Moynihan: Such a system will be introduced as part of the implementation of EC directive 84/631 on the trans-frontier shipment of hazardous waste. We intend to implement the Directive as soon as possible.

Ramsar Convention (Designated Sites)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites in the United Kingdom which have been designated as covered by the Ramsar convention; and what protection is afforded by such classification.

Mr. Moynihan: A list of the sites in the United Kingdom covered under the Ramsar convention was given to the hon. Member in a written answer on 25 November.

In great Britain it is a prerequisite for Ramsar classification that sites must first have been notified as sites of special scientific interest. Such sites are protected by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which imposes restrictions on potentially damaging operations. In Northern Ireland similar protection is afforded to ASSIs. I shall shortly be issuing revised advice to local authorities emphasising the importance of giving due weight to the needs of nature conservation in considering development proposals affecting such designated sites.

Ancillary Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the savings from privatising domestic cleaning and other ancillary services in the county of Lincolnshire.

Mr. Chope: The Department does not collect systematic data of this sort.

Boswell Houses (Repairs)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to make special provision for the funding of repairs to local authority-owned Boswell-type houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: No; local authorities must decide their own expenditure priorities, including renovation of their own housing stock, within the overall resources available to them.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to approve a repair system in respect of Boswell-type houses, designated under the Housing Act 1985; what advice he has offered owners of such houses awaiting action on their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Under the housing defects legislation it is for the local authority, rather than the Secretary of State, to specify the works needed in any particular case. However, the National House Building Council has set up a subsidiary company, PRC Homes Ltd., to approve and license repair systems for designated houses. I understand that no repair method has yet been proposed for Boswell houses and that the nature of the defect is such that repair to the standard required by the legislation is not easy. Meanwhile, it could be helpful if owners awaiting action were to discuss the position with their local authorities and reach an understanding on a likely timetable for assistance.

Tree Planting

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further initiatives he will take to encourage public and private tree planting schemes.

Mr. Moynihan: I have made an additional £3 million available in the current financial year to help replace trees damaged in the storm on 16 October. I am also giving my full support to National Tree Week, which has been organised by the Tree Council.

North Sea Conference

70. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the achievements of the international North sea conference held on 23 and 24 November.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on Monday, 30 November by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) at column *416-17*. (Vol. 123 cols. 416/7).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Water Industry (Coastal Protection)

95. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of the privatisation of the water industry on the coastal protection functions of local councils.

Mr. Gummer: The privatisation of the water industry will have no effect on the coastal protection functions of local councils.

Broadleaved Woodlands (Grants)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many grants have been made under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme, since its inception, by county, in England and Wales;

(2) what is the average value of grants made so far under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme and the total value of such grants made for each county in England and Wales;

(3) what is the average and total area planted under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme for each county in England and Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: Information is readily available only for the period from the inception of the scheme (1 October 1985) to 31 March 1987 for Forestry Commission conservancies, follows:

Conservancy	Number of planting grant payments	Total value of grant payments (£s)	Average value of grant payments (£s)	Total area planted (hectares)	Average area planted per payment (hectares)
North England	125	114,629	917	175	1·40
East England	394	387,588	984	550	1·40
West England	401	573,622	1,430	539	1·34
Wales	79	80,449	1,018	110	1·39

This information relates to areas of planting (including rehabilitation and natural regeneration) in respect of which grants have been paid. During the same period, a total of 3,106 applications were approved for entry to the scheme in England and Wales, relating to a total area of 20,222 hectares, a considerable proportion of which remains to be planted under five-year plans of operation.

Food (Import Levy)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the current levels of import levy on the food products covered by the common agricultural policy; what were the comparable levels at the same date in each of the previous five years, on the same basis as the information provided in his written reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East on 12 January, *Official Report*, column *44*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is set out in the table:

Import levies[1] applicable in the United Kingdom for the main food items covered by the common agricultural policy: fourth Wednesday in November 1982 to 1987

£/tonne

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Common wheat	66	62	35	79	114	129
Barley	70	40	43	78	111	123
Maize	67	36	43	64	101	110
Rice	268	260	303	365	416	423
Sugar (white)[2]	251	237	281	286	305	336
Olive oil	198	322	371	464	314	407
Butter[3]	1,059	1,355	1,221	1,464	1,727	1,835
SMP	508	576	676	892	935	776
Beef and veal[4]	1,214	1,386	1,442	1,504	1,263	1,631
Pigmeat	381	335	246	317	523	565
Poultrymeat	197	156	137	172	279	302
Eggs	216	175	149	186	309	293

Notes: All figures have been rounded to the nearest £.

[1] The rates of levy vary for different tariff headings. The rates quoted are: beef and veal-carcase; pigmeat-carcase; poultrymeat-70 per cent. chickens: rice-wholly milled long grain; olive oil-virgin; eggs in shell. Levies are shown after adjustment for the United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts where applicable.

[2] In practice the United Kingdom's imports from third countries are normally covered by the Lome Convention and enter the Community levy free.

[3] A special lower rate of levy is applicable to imports of butter from New Zealand.

[4] Most imports of beef from third countries are subject to special arrangements allowing entry at reduced levy rates.

Crops (Diversification)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish a detailed statement on proposals for the diversification of crops in the agricultural industry.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* We intend to publish very shortly a detailed consultation document relating to the Community scheme for extensification of production, and suggesting ways in which that might be given effect in the United Kingdom, for both cereals and beef.

I shall be inviting views of all interested parties on this document.

Cereal Substitutes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the total tonnage of cereal substitutes imported into the United Kingdom over each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The total tonnage of materials on the European Commission list of cereal substitutes imported into the United Kingdom in each of the past ten years was as follows:

	'000 tonnes
1977	358
1978	365
1979	432
1980	519
1981	1,382
1982	2,129
1983	1,441

	'000 tonnes
1984	1,048
1985	1,047
1986	1,028

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Fisheries

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he was consulted or asked to approve the awarding of licences for the extraction of fish within the 150 mile fisheries zone surrounding the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* No. Responsibility for the management of fisheries within the Falkland Islands conservation zone rests with the Falkland Islands Government.

Sea Pollution

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many scientists have worked on the research programme of his Department on sea pollution matters, for each year since 1975.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The estimated man years of scientific effort deployed by my Department on work in connection with the protection of the marine environment are:

	Number
1978-79	101
1979-80	85
1980-81	95
1981-82	90
1982-83	86
1983-84	97
1984-85	88
1985-86	105
1986-87	117

Figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of his Department's research staff responsible for matters related to pollution in the North sea have been working in his Department for more than five years.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* Sixty-one of my Department's scientific staff undertaking work which includes matters related to pollution in the North sea have been employed by the Ministry for more than five years.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what role the fisheries protection service plays in the monitoring and policing of the oil pollution from ships *(a)* in the North sea and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom's territorial waters.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* The aircraft and vessels of the fisheries protection service are required to report any oil pollution which impinges on fisheries to the appropriate enforcement authorities. Prime responsibility within the United Kingdom for monitoring and policing illegal discharges from ships at sea rests with the marine pollution control unit of the Department of Transport.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Quarrying (Kennedies)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a planning appeal was lodged under section 24 of the planning order to allow quarrying at Kennedies, County Armagh.

Mr. Needham: An appeal under article 24 of the Planning (NI) Order 1972 was lodged with the Planning Appeals Commission on 10 August 1987 in respect of a planning application for quarrying and crushing of rock at Cavanapole road, Kennedies, Killylea.

Quarrying (Navan Fort)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when rock quarrying and rock processing will cease at Navan fort; and when the quarrying equipment and rock-processing equipment will be removed.

Mr. Needham: The extraction of rock from the quarry adjacent to Navan fort ceased at the end of September 1987. The operator of the quarry is not required to cease the processing of rock, nor to remove quarrying equipment or rock-processing equipment.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy towards the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in the light of the opinion of the chairman of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, Sir Charles Carter, on the Anglo-Irish Agreement contained in the publication "Two Years of Peace, Stability and Reconciliation?", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The objectives for which we signed the agreement remain valid, and it is important to continue to pursue them. Further progress towards peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland will, in part, depend on the willingness of constitutional politicians to engage, irrespective of their attitudes to the agreement in renewed dialogue about the future government of the Province, Sir Charles Carter's pamphlet makes a constructive contribution to such debate.

Family Planning

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients were registered with general practitioners for National Health Service contraceptive services in 1986 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Patients are not required to register for particular services provided by their general practitioner.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many general practitioners are registered to provide a National Health Service family planning service to their patients in Northern Ireland; and how many premises are involved.

Mr. Needham: At 31 December 1986, 866 general practitioners were registered to provide contraceptive services to their patients in Northern Ireland.

The information regarding the number of premises is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Home Helps

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people whose home helps were withdrawn applied in the past year for an allowance from the Department of Health and Social Security to pay for a daily visit for the purpose of cooking meals, lighting fires and other domestic tasks.

Mr. Needham: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disporportionate cost.

Community Relations

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the community relations unit will examine the community relations impact of Government labour-market intervention schemes.

Dr. Mawhinney: A number of Government policies are being considered by the central community relations unit as possibilities for a review of their community relations impact. It is too early to decide on the precise policies or schemes to be examined.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if it is his intention to instruct the community relations unit to commission comparative research into the issue of community relations in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. However, the unit will be meeting Home Office officials to discuss areas of co-operation, including research. It will also consider the need for further research into community relations issues within Northern Ireland.

Southern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will consider locating the new Southern health and social services board offices in Newry or Armagh; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will name the sites investigated by the Southern health and social services board in Newry Town and Armagh;

(3) to what extent the accommodation space being proposed by the Southern health and social services board at Portadown is in excess of present staff needs; and if he will make a statement.

(4) what is the proposed capital expenditure by the Southern health and social services board for new premises; and how many staff are to be accommodated;

(5) if he will indicate the estimated revenue consequences of the new building at Portadown for the Southern health and social services board.

Mr. Needham *[holding answers 1 December 1987]:* The Southern health and social services board have made proposals for new headquarters premises in Craigavon costing £1·94 million with estimated revenue consequences of £163,000 per annum. The premises will accommodate approximately 140 professional and administrative staff and the level of provision proposed is the minimum required for this number. The board investigated sites at the former prison in Armagh and Towerhill hospital but no sites were investigated in Newry since one of the criteria used for selecting possible sites was that they should be central to the board's area.

No decision has yet been made on the board's proposals and I will bear the hon. Gentleman's comments in mind when I consider the project.

Cross-border Incursions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the incursion of Irish troops into the United Kingdom at the village of Calloville on 11 November 1987.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* This incursion was brought to the attention of the Irish authorities. As is generally the case in respect of the security forces on each side of the border, the incursion was inadvertent.

Strabane Flooding (Assistance)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will reconsider the levels of assistance given to victims of the Strabane flood disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* Considerable assistance has already been given to help alleviate urgent need in Strabane, including £210,000 paid out under the social security system, the distribution of free coal to households, temporary residential accommodation provided by both the voluntary and statutory agencies and replacement of electricity meters free of charge. Each household affected will also be receiving £126 within the next few days through the finance provided by the European Commission. It is not the responsibility of Government to compensate for insurable losses but urgent consideration is now being given to see whether further help could be provided for those in genuine need.

Sinn Fein Incident Centres

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums of official money have been paid and to whom in respect of expenditure on Sinn Fein incident centres; for which years or financial years they were paid; on which departmental rates they were borne; whether any accounts as to the expenditure of such sums were produced by the organisation which received such funds; where each such incident centre was located; and whether any are still operating.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* As far as my Department is aware, no financial assistance from public funds was ever paid to the self-styled incident centres that were established and run by Sinn Fein in 1975.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Forth: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed as representing the House of Commons Commission, what was the total identifiable cost to public funds of the departmentally-related Select Committees in July 1986; and what were the comparable identifiable costs to public funds arising from *(a)* the employment of permanent staff and *(b)* other commitments in July 1987.

Mr. Beith: Such information as is available for the period including July 1986 is given in the Select Committee returns for Sessions 1985-86 (HC 172) and 1986-87 (HC 79). Additional information for the period including July 1987 will be provided in the sessional return for 1987-88. Permanent staff costs for the months of July 1986 and July 1987 were £101,430 and £107,134 respectively. Payments in respect of other commitments such as shorthand writers' fees and Committee visits amounted to £55,473 in July 1986 and to £50,663 in July 1987. Many of these payments were in respect of costs incurred in earlier months. The figures do not include printing and publishing costs which are normally recovered from sales revenue, including revenue from the House and Government Departments.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 December 1987

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the 20 local authorities in England which will gain the most and the 20 which will lose the most on cash terms, as the basis of his proposals for a unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: In principle, the present grant arrangements remove the benefit of high rateable value from local authorities by making corresponding reduction in grant entitlements. Under our proposals for grant in the new system, grant per adult will vary between authorities only in so far as authorities' expenditure needs vary. A simple comparison of non-domestic rate income to authorities before and after introduction of a uniform business rate would be misleading in not allowing for the different grant effects.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the National League for the Blind and Disabled regarding the Local Government Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: A circular letter from the league was received in my Department on 26 November and is being considered.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consult women's organisations with regard to the particular effect of the proposed community charge upon women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: We engaged in a major consultation exercise on all aspects of our proposals after we published the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714. Women's organisations have had ample opportunity to make representations, both during and after the formal consultation period and several have done so. My officials have, for example, had a recent meeting with representatives of Women's Aid organisations. I announced the outcome of those discussions in the answer I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman).

Birmingham (Charles Housing Action Area)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 27 October, *Official Report*, column 209, he has yet received a formal submission from Birmingham city council for the declaration of the Charles housing action area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No submission has yet been received. I understand that Birmingham city council is still considering its proposals for the Charles housing action area.

Waltham Forest

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional administration costs falling on the London borough of Waltham Forest as a result of his decision to make transitional arrangements for the introduction of community charge in that borough; and if he will reimburse those additional administration costs.

Mr. Howard: In the first instance, the size of any extra costs must be a matter for the local authority. The question of support for administration costs will be an issue for the rate and revenue support grant settlements for the years in question.

Local Authorities (Investments)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if in the light of the failure of the *News on Sunday* newspaper, he will introduce legislation to define the types of venture in which local authorities are permitted to invest pension fund money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The management, use and investment of local government superannuation fund moneys and related matters are already subject to the provisions of part P of the Local Government Superannuation Regulations 1986 (Statutory Instrument 1986 No. 24). My right hon. Friend is currently considering a number of options to control further the investment of local government pension fund monies in the light of the failure of the *News on Sunday* newspaper.

Easington (Housing)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of new private houses built in the Easington constituency in the last three years.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not collected for individual constituencies.

Power Stations (Emissions)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the proportion of fossil fuel power stations that have been fitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment in (i) west Germany and (ii) Sweden; and what is the figure for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Information on control technology in operation in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Sweden is contained in the major review of national strategies and policies for air pollution abatement, published this year by the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution. A copy of the report

("National Strategies and Policies for Air Pollution Abatement" (paragraph 50). Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, United Nations, New York, 1987)

has been placed in the Library of the House.

At present, no power stations in the United Kingdom are so equipped, but the Central Electricity Generating Board plans to retrofit 6,000 MW of generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation equipment during the next

10 years. Furthermore, all new fossil fuel fired power stations will be required to have the technology to control sulphur emissions.

Urban Programme

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many urban programme fund units on the industrial estate at Milkwood road, London S.E.24 are now occupied; and what was the total number of units funded.

Mr. Trippier: I understand from the London borough of Lambeth, which is responsible for letting these units, that 36 units on the Mahatma Gandhi/Milkwood Road industrial estate are let out of a total of 41 and that negotiations are in hand to let three of the remainder.

Storm Damage

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to give the estimated costs of the damage caused by the storms in October in *(a)* Essex and *(b)* the Basildon area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Essex has estimated that the cost of storm damage to them will be around £8 million. Information for Basildon is not available. Expenditure above a threshold will be eligible for special financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme, or in respect of insurable losses and, where authorities have not insured, additional capital allocations will be available this year for repair works that are capitalised.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to list, by region, the estimated cost of the damage caused by the storms in October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not yet have sufficient reliable information to provide such an estimate. We expect the majority of local authorities' storm damage expenditure to be eligible under the Bellwin scheme, and so to qualify for special financial assistance above the threshold, or to be in respect of insurable losses. Where authorities have nevertheless failed to insure, additional capital allocations will be available this year for repair works that are capitalised.

Subways (Bulwell, Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what applications he has received from Nottingham county council for money to enable the subways on Crabtree road, Bulwell, Nottingham, to be filled in.

Mr. Trippier: I know of no such bid from the county council. Nottingham city council applied in January for an Estate Action allocation for improvements to Crabtree Farm estate. These included filling up two subways. The bid was unsuccessful but I understand that more comprehensive proposals may be put forward again for 1988-89. If they are I shall consider them carefully.

Albert Memorial

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to restore the Albert memorial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The memorial is now over 100 years old. Water penetration has caused corrosion which has weakened the iron structure of the roof and spire. Below the roof level the structure of the memorial is generally sound, but many of the sculptures and other decorations have been damaged or are badly weathered.

The Government therefore intend that the memorial should be repaired and restored. Costs will of course have to be contained within acceptable levels. I shall be seeking further expert advice on the feasibility and cost of alternative options before deciding on how to proceed.

I am arranging for an engineer's report on the condition of the ironwork in the roof and spire to be placed in the Library.

Urban Development Corporations

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the criteria for selecting members of urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend is considering the procedures.

Homeless Women

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the proportion of the homeless who are women;

(2) what proportion of households living in bed and breakfast accommodation are headed by women.

Mrs. Roe: I regret that this information is not available.

Victim Support Schemes

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure that every local authority has adequate resources to provide victim support schemes.

Mr. Chope: The rate support grant settlement includes provision for both personal social services, and for services which are the responsibility of the Home Office. It is, however, entirely for individual authorities to make resources available for particular activities.

Homeless Children

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his policy is towards the resettling of homeless children outside their original local education authority boundaries; what advice he offers to local authorities contemplating such a resettlement; and what advice he offers to the local authorities into whose areas the children may be moved.

Mrs. Roe: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to her on 12 November, at column 191.

LDDC (Board Members)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to review the selection criteria for members of the London Docklands Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The selection criteria for LDDC members are reviewed on each occasion when a vacancy occurs.

Housing (Repair Systems)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the types of dwelling-houses which have so far been designated under the Housing Act 1985, and indicate for which of these a repair system has been determined.

Mrs. Roe: The 24 house types designated nationally under the Housing Defects legislation—part XVI of the Housing act 1985—are listed in the table, together with progress on repair systems for each. In all, the national House-Building Council's subsidiary, PRC Homes Ltd., has now approved 44 repair systems covering 11 of the most common house types. More detailed progress reports are provided regularly by PRC Homes Ltd. and are placed in the Library.

Designated house type	*Number of repair systems submitted but not yet licensed*	*Number licensed by PRC Homes Ltd.*
Airey	6	7
Boot	—	1
Boswell	—	—
Cornish Unit	—	10
Dorran	2	—
Dyke	—	—
Gregory	—	—
Myton	1	—
Newland	2	1
Orlit	1	1
Parkinson	1	2
Reema Hollow Panel	1	2
Schindler and Hawksley SGS	1	—
Smith	—	1
Stent	—	2
Stonecrete	—	—
Tarran	1	—
Underdown	—	—
Unity and Butterley	2	7
Waller	—	—
Wates	1	6
Wessex	—	—
Winget	—	—
Woolaway	—	5
Totals	19	[1]44

[1] Includes 5 systems licensed subject to amendments.

Radioactive Waste

Mrs. Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to ban the use of concrete as a form of containment for radioactive waste in the light of the problem of alkali silica reaction.

Mr. Trippier: Research is progressing into the integrity of cement as an encapsulating medium. I will make no decision until that research is completed.

Concrete (Alkali Silica Reaction)

Mrs. Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases of alkali silica reaction in concrete have been reported in the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Trippier: There is no formal system of reporting cases of alkali silica reaction to my Department. However, I understand that the Building Research Establishment has had 20 cases brought to its attention.

Mrs. Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on progress in establishing a design of concrete mixes which would not be susceptible to alkali silica reaction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Work is in progress at the Building Research Establishment on methods of test and classification of aggregates. The test methods are now being submitted to the British Standards Institution as a draft standard. BRE is also revising its present recommendations on mixes in BRE Digest 258 and is contributing to a committee of the Concrete Society which is considering the subject.

PSA (Fees)

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what fee reductions have been achieved in the Property Services Agency as a result of fee competition on major works projects since the agency's initial review which covered the period July 1984 to December 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The fee reductions achieved through fee competition and fee negotiation in 1986 compared with those of the initial review which covered the period July 1984—December 1985 are as follows:

Percentage

	Fee competition		*Fee negotiation*	
	1984-85	*1986*	*1984-85*	*1986*
Architectural commissions	15	32	3	7
Quantity Surveying commissions	26	35	8	21
Mechanical and Electrical Engineering commissions	15	24	2	4
Civil and Structural Engineering commissions	10	39	1	14

In view of the increased level of savings from competition and the continuing difference between competition and negotiation, I have decided that the current £2 million project value threshold above which fee bids are sought will be reduced to £1 million from 1 January 1988.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the report on

schizophrenia research of the Medical Research Council's schizophrenia and allied conditions committee to be published.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Medical Research Council that the report is due to be published early in 1988.

School Discipline

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with standards of school discipline; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 1 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed).

Deaf-blind Children

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has of the numbers of deaf-blind children in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 November at column 375. This information should be available when the analysis of responses to the questionnaire which accompanied the Department's consultative document on educational provision for deaf-blind children is complete.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a statement on the educational needs of deaf-blind children.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend hopes that the final version of the Department's policy statement on educational provision for deaf-blind children will be published in the new year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many replies he has received to the consultative document about the numbers of deaf-blind children within each local education authority.

Mr. Dunn: Seventy-nine — four out of 97 — local education authorities in England replied to the questionnaire which accompanied the Department's consultative document. In addition, 42 replies were received in response to the points raised in the consultative document itself.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet officials of SENSE, the National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association, to discuss the educational needs of deaf-blind children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 November at column 375.

Universities (Female Academic Staff)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proportion of women academic staff in British universities who are employed on short-term and temporary contracts.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not collected centrally.

Dundee University (Medical Teaching)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the ratio of medical teaching staff to medical students at Dundee university for each year since 1974.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows:

Academic year	*Pre-clinical medicine and dentistry*	*Clinical medicine*
1974-75	6·1:1	6·8:1
1975-76	5·0:1	6·8:1
1976-77	5·8:1	7·0:1
1977-78	6·0:1	7·5:1
1978-79	5·9:1	7·5:1
1979-80	5·9:1	7·1:1
1980-81	6·6:1	9·5:1
1981-82	8·6:1	5·9:1
1982-83	7·5:1	6·7:1
1983-84	10·9:1	7·0:1
1984-85	12·9:1	7·5:1
1985-86	12·5:1	7·4:1

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of new medical students admitted to Dundee university for each year since 1974.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows:

Academic year	*First year admissions*
1974-75	115
1975-76	104
1976-77	119
1977-78	112
1978-79	103
1979-80	118
1980-81	116
1981-82	119
1982-83	114
1983-84	121
1984-85	120
1985-86	120
1986-87	132
1987-88	[1]115

[1] Provisional.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the provision of funds for medical equipment and laboratories in Dundee university for the purposes of medical teaching and training, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Jackson: The University Grants Committee's allocations of furniture and equipment grant to Dundee university were as follows:

Academic year	*£000*
1974-75	389
1975-76	821
1976-77	209
1977-78	536
1978-79	462
1979-80	572
1980-81	772
1981-82	805
1982-83	830
1983-84	790
1984-85	830

Academic year	£000
1985-86	1,173
1986-87	983
1987-88	1,287

The use of such grants in the various subject areas is a matter for individual universities.

Dundee University (Student Applications)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of applications made to Dundee University; and as to how many places were available, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: Full-time undergraduate new entrants to Dundee university were as follows:

Academic year	New entrants
1979-80	702
1980-81	895
1981-82	877
1982-83	797
1983-84	656
1984-85	795
1985-86	860

Information on applications to individual universities is not collected centrally.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Wall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the United Kingdom spends per capita on higher and further education; and what information he has as to the per capita expenditure in *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Sweden, *(c)* West Germany and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 1 December 1987]*: For international purposes, data for non-advanced further education are included with secondary education and cannot be separately identified. Figures for Sweden are not readily available.

Current public expenditure on higher education per capita is given in the table:

£ at 1983 prices[1]

Country	Year of data	All HE expenditure	Excluding student support, welfare and general research funding[2]
United Kingdom[3]	1983	57	34
United States of America[4]	1982	168	149
Germany, Federal Republic of	1983	37	14
Japan[5]	1982	23	13

[1] At purchasing power parity: expenditure adjusted to calendar year, where necessary, using consumer prices indices.
[2] General research funding data for 1982 adjusted to 1983 from ABRC report below.
[3] Excludes expenditure on nursing and paramedical courses at DHSS establishments.
[4] Includes capital expenditure.
[5] Excludes public subsidies to private education.
Sources: Statistical Bulletin 4/87.
UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1986.
U.N. Demographic Yearbook.
ABRC Science Policy Studies No. 2 — International Comparisons of Government Funding of Academic and Academically Related Research.

PRIME MINISTER

Stoke Newington

Q29. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next plans to pay an official visit to Stoke Newington.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Charlton Marshall

Q61. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Charlton Marshall.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Teesside

Q104. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Teesside.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

EC (Takeovers and Mergers)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the proposal by the EEC Commission that major takeovers and mergers of United Kingdom companies should require the prior approval of the Commission; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Discussion of this matter is continuing within the Community, and it would not be appropriate to raise it at the European Council.

Terrorism

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what was the status of the recent declaration of the European Council on combating terrorism; if she will raise the issue again at the Council in the light of the agreement on hostage exchanges concluded between the French and Iranian Governments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The December 1986 European Council statement reaffirmed all EC partners' commitments to make no concessions under duress to terrorists or their sponsors. This remains our position which I shall restate at the Council. I expect that the French Government will wish to take the opportunity of the European Council on 4-5 December to give an account of the events leading to the release of the French hostages.

Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the recent report of the European Economic Community Court of Auditors about the legality of the transfer of butter dumping responsibility to member states; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 1 December at column *508*.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Prime Minister if, when she meets Mr. Gorbachev, she will ask for the release of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I doubt that it will be practical to raise individual cases in the limited time available. The Soviet authorities are well aware of our views in this case.

Security

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, if she will take disciplinary action against those members of the security services who failed to pass on information to the Cabinet Secretary about their conduct in relation to Chapman Pincher's "Their Trade is Treachery"; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Fatal Accidents

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will recommend the establishment of a Royal Commission to examine the implications of public expenditure levels on essential services for the ability to prevent serious fatal accidents in those services; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. Public expenditure on essential services will continue to be determined in the normal way, having full regard to the safety of those working in the industries and of the wider public.

Engagements

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 3 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be departing later today for Copenhagen to attend the European Council.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Bogus Prescriptions

Mr. Holt: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions for fraud involving bogus prescriptions by *(a)* doctors and *(b)* pharmacists have been made in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service does not keep separate records of prosecutions for fraud involving bogus prescriptions, and the answer to the hon. Member's question cannot therefore be ascertained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General (1) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Mr. Mohammed Fazal of Washwood Heath Road, Birmingham, for fraudulently accepting as payment for a razor a National Health Service prescription with a value of £14; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Dr. Mohammed Mahmood of Green Lane, Bradford, for fraudulently charging for a prescription, knowing that the prescribed drugs were to be dispatched abroad; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Dr. Ashish Banerji, of Front Street, Newcastle, for fraudulently charging for a prescription knowing that the prescribed drugs were to be dispatched abroad; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Dr. Rai Ahmed Sangra, of Birmingham for fraudulently charging for a prescription, knowing that the prescribed drugs were to be dispatched abroad; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Dr. John Tighe of Nechells, Birmingham, for fraudulently charging for a prescription, knowing that the prescribed drugs were to be dispatched abroad; and if he will make a statement;

(6) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Mr. Terence Taylor of Lumbs Lane, Bradford, for fraudulently accepting as payment for a toothbrush and a medicinal drink a National Health Service prescription with a value of £20; and if he will make a statement;

(7) whether the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute Mr. Jawaid Ahmed, of Washwood Heath Road, Birmingham, for fraudulently accepting as payment for a packet of nappies a National Health Service prescription with a value of £30; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service has not received any papers from the police in relation to the matters raised by the hon. Member's questions.

British Gas Shares

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what advice is being given to magistrates who hold shares in British Gas in relation to disqualification or otherwise when issuing entry warrants on behalf of British Gas.

The Attorney-General: Whether justices who hold shares in British Gas are disqualified from hearing applications for entry warrants made on behalf of British Gas is a question of law, on which they will be advised by their clerk.

Zircon Affair

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what criteria he used in deciding to make his announcement, concerning the decision not to bring prosecutions in the Zircon affair, in the form of a written answer.

The Attorney-General: In following earlier precedents, I adopted the most convenient way of ensuring that the first public announcement of my decision was made to this honourable House; and that it was made as soon after the decision was taken as was practicable.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government intend to make a contribution to the Disasters Emergency Committee's appeal for Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have just informed the disasters emergency committee that the Overseas Development Administration will be contributing £2 million to its appeal. This follows the Government's recent £2 million contribution to the United Nations' airlift operation and brings to over £25 million the Government's help so far this year for famine relief in Ethiopia.

Crown Agents (Pension Division)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with plans to merge the Crown Agents pension division with the Overseas Development Administration at East Kilbride.

Mr. Chris Patten: The merger took place on 1 December.

WALES

Family Planning

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients were registered with general practitioners for National Health Service contraceptive services in 1986 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Registration with general practitioners for contraceptive services is not required.

An estimate of the number of patients in receipt of National Health Service contraceptive services from general practitioners in 1986 is 126,000.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of the general practitioner provision for National Health Service family planning services to patients for 1986 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: For financial year 1986-87 the estimated cost is £2·7 million.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners are registered to provide a National Health Service family planning service to their patients in Wales; and how many premises are involved.

Mr. Ian Grist: There were in Wales at the 1 October 1986, 1,530 general practitioners who provided a family planning service. Of these, 368 provided the service to only those who were registered with them for general medical service, and 1,162 provided a family planning service to any patient irrespective of whether that patient was registered with that general practitioner or not. No information is available centrally on how many premises are involved.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of *(a)* men and *(b)* women attending sexually transmitted diseases clinics in Cardiff and tested for HIV have proved to be HIV positive.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available centrally.

National Park Planning Board

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many members of each Welsh national park planning board live within the area of that park as a percentage of the total numbers on each board.

Mr. Roberts: The Welsh national parks are administered by National Park Committees rather than planning boards. The relevant information in respect of the committees is as follows:

	per cent.
Snowdonia	42
Brecon Beacons	56
Pembrokeshire Coast	22

National Parks

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Welsh national parks and the parliamentary constituencies that fall within the boundaries of each park.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Brecon Beacons:
Brecon and Radnor
Carmarthen
Monmouth
Cynon Valley
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Torfaen
Blaenau Gwent

Pembrokeshire Coast:
Pembroke
Ceredigion and Pembroke North

Snowdonia:
Conwy
Caernarfon
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy
Clwyd South West
Montgomery
Ceredigion and Pembroke North

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department purchases its stationery from Her Majesty's Stationery Office; it contains varying elements of recycled paper. A small proportion of my Department's waste paper is recycled.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which museums had employed Touche Ross and Co. as management consultants before February 1986; and what were the total fees paid by the National Museum of Wales to Touche Ross and Co. from grant in aid, in respect of its inquiry into its department of art conducted in 1986.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The decision to employ Touche Ross and Co. was made by the National Museum of Wales authorities acting under the terms of their Royal charter. The fee paid was £43,398·70.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, with regard to the staffing recommendations of his Department's staff inspectors for the department of art of the National Museum of Wales in 1983-84, how many conservators were in post at the time of the inspection, how many conservators were specified in the complement recommended and whether a new post at Curatorial Grade F (Registrar) was recommended.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were two full-time and one part-time conservators in post at the time of the staff inspection. An increase to four conservator posts was recommended. A new post at curatorial grade F was also reommended.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when officers of the National Museum of Wales asked Dr. Roderick Bowen, QC to undertake the inquiry into allegations of professional misconduct in the department of art; when members of staff of the National Musuem were requested to submit their statements of complaint; and what disciplinary action was taken subsequently with respect to the writer of the unauthorised letter to the president of the National Museum, dated 16 September 1982, alleging professional misconduct;

(2) what were the allegations of professional misconduct in the department of art of the National Museum of Wales as a result of which a senior member of its council conducted an inquiry in 1982; and when the keeper of the department of art was provided with them in writing.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 6 November 1987 at column *891*.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister of the Arts what statements he has made, following his approval of the virement of funds from those voted by Parliament for the purchase of specimens by the National Musuem of Wales in 1984-85, about his policy towards permitting such virement in future and as to what steps he will take to ensure that this policy is adhered to.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department's policy, which is that virement between expenditure heads should be limited to meeting exceptional needs for which specific provision has not been made, is understood and accepted by the museum authorities. As for the steps taken by the Department to ensure compliance with the policy, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Treasury minute on the fifteenth report of the Committee of Public Accounts 1986-87 (Cm. 236).

Mid Wales (EC Funding)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if Her Majesty's Government will make representations to the European Commission as to the peripherality and extreme rurality of Mid Wales, so as to reinforce the case for continued European regional development fund funding for Mid Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the European Commission to ensure that the forthcoming reforms of the European Community's structural funds will not result in the exclusion of Mid Wales from access to the funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Discussions continue — on the basis of draft Commission proposals — but on the key objectives which will underpin the future operation of the EC structural funds and on the criteria for defining those areas which may, in the longer term, be eligible for assistance. My Department is fully involved in such discussions and I have already made, in the course of them, representations to the Commission regarding the continued inclusion of Mid-Wales for European regional development fund purposes. Final decisions on the review will be a matter for the Council but I have naturally a very strong interest in seeking to ensure that structural fund assistance is retained in all those parts of Wales where the funds have a continuing role to play in structural re-adjustment.

Fatal Road Accidents

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many deaths in road traffic accidents occurred in the years 1985, 1986 and the first three quarters of 1987 by counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Number of deaths arising from road traffic accidents

	1985	*1986*	[1] *1987*
Clwyd	35	49	15
Dyfed	40	36	18
Gwent	34	39	7
Gwynedd	21	21	15
Mid Glamorgan	47	28	14
Powys	12	12	9
South Glamorgan	29	26	11
West Glamorgan	27	23	9
Wales	245	235	98

[1] Figures for 1987 are for January-June inclusive and are provisional. No later information is currently available.

There is an encouraging downward trend in the number of deaths on roads in Wales, and we hope that this will continue.

Foreign Language Teaching

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals for the establishment of an initiative to improve foreign language teaching in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A modern foreign language will be one of the foundation subjects in the National curriculum for all children in Wales aged 11-16 under our proposals in the Education Reform Bill. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I will be publishing shortly a joint statement of policy for modern language teaching in England and Wales.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline the year-by-year change in real terms in Welsh local authority capital expenditure provision, in the light of his announcement of 30 November in an answer to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) in *(a)* the period since the present capital control system was introduced in 1981-82 up to the latest provision for 1988-89, and *(b)* the period 1978-79 to 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: Gross capital provision between 1981-82 to 1988-89 in real terms is shown in the following table. Comparable figures for 1978-79 to 1980-81 are not readily available.

At 1987-88 prices[1] *£ million*

	Gross provision
1981-82	346
1982-83	428
1983-84	472
1984-85	395
1985-86	376
1986-87	385
1987-88	410
1988-89	400
Percentage change 1981-82 to 1988-89	16

[1] as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices applicable at 24 September 1987.

Contaminated Soil

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to monitor at all stages the transit and storage arrangements made with regard to the consignment of 800 tons of contaminated soil imported into the port of Mostyn from Holland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The handling of this consignment was monitored by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the plant health and seeds inspectorate.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

German Democratic Republic

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of the German Democratic Republic following reports of persecution in that country of Protestant churches by the state security police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We deplore abuses of human rights wherever they occur. We are discussing with our European partners an appropriate reaction to the reports and continue to take opportunities to urge the Government of the German Democratic Republic to fulfil their commitments under the United Nations charter on human rights and the Helsinki final act.

Acapulco Declaration

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will have urgent talks with his European Community colleagues in order to take practical steps in support of the Acapulco declaration signed by the Rio 8 group of countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We shall be giving the Acapulco declaration full consideration. In some areas which it covers, we share the Group of Eight's approach, for example, through the current efforts of the Twelve to encourage negotiated peace in central America. We look forward to continuing, with our European Community colleagues, the political dialogue with the Group of Eight begun last September in New York.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to support the demands contained in the Acapulco declaration recently signed by the Rio 8 group of countries.

Mr. Eggar: We welcome the positive aspects of the Acapulco declaration for peace development and democracy, which we are studying.

We shall continue to support the current efforts to achieve a peace settlement in Central America. The United Kingdom voted in favour of the United Nations General Assembly resolution concerning the south Atlantic zone of peace to which the declaration refers, and we have consistently supported efforts to eradicate drug trafficking.

We welcome, too, the commitment of the Group of Eight to continue to seek negotiated solutions to the debt problem. We recognise the severity of many countries' difficulties and the need for the international community to provide adequate support to countries implementing economic reform programmes.

Latin America's debt problems are primarily a matter for negotiation between the debtor country and the commercial banks in which creditor Governments should not intervene.

We will continue to play our part, with our European Community partners, in the dialogue with Latin American states represented in the Group of Eight, which was begun in New York in September.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure

on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown, by region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development."

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to answer on behalf of my right hon. Friends.

The information is not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Butcher: My Department uses paper having a recycled content where this is consistent with operational efficiency and offers good value for money. General printing and writing papers contain up to 10 per cent. recycled fibre, the buff envelopes in general use contain at least 50 per cent. recycled fibre, and some stationery items are made of 100 per cent. recycled material. Used paper is disposed of for recycling where this is consistent with economic and security considerations. Following a paper recycling commitment conference which I chaired in January 1987, a working group is exploring the scope for greater use of waste paper in the production of printing and writing papers which are acceptable to private and public sector users in terms of both quality and cost.

Balance of Payments (International Comparisons)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has about the balance of payments surpluses and deficits for the seven leading industrialised countries in each of the years 1981 to 1986.

Mr. Butcher: The information is in the table. International comparisons are normally made in a common currency, but exchange rate fluctuations cause different trends to emerge depending on which currency is used. Data are therefore given both in United States dollars and in national currencies.

Balance of payments on current account
United States $ billion

	United States of America	*Japan*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*France*	*Canada*	*Italy*	*United Kingdom*
1981	+6·9	+4·8	−5·0	−4·8	−5·1	−9·5	+13·1
1982	−8·6	+6·9	+3·9	−12·1	+2·2	−6·4	+6·9
1983	−46·3	+20·8	+4·2	−5·2	+2·5	+1·4	+5·0
1984	−107·1	+35·0	+8·2	−0·9	+2·6	−2·3	+1·8
1985	−116·4	+49·2	+15·7	+0·9	−0·9	−3·5	+4·2
1986	−141·5	+85·8	+37·7	+3·4	−6·7	+4·8	−1·5

Sources: United Kingdom—Department of Trade and Industry;
Others—IMF International Financial Statistics.

National currencies

	billion US $	*trillion Yen*	*billion DM*	*billion Francs*	*billion Can $*	*trillion Lira*	*billion £*
1981	+6·9	+1·3	−11·7	−25·8	−6·1	..	+6·3
1982	−8·6	+1·9	+9·9	−79·3	+2·9	..	+4·0
1983	−46·3	+5·1	+10·6	−35·7	+3·1	+2·2	+3·3
1984	−107·1	+8·5	+23·9	−7·3	+3·4	−4·6	+1·5
1985	−116·4	+11·7	+44·5	−1·5	−1·2	−6·9	+2·9
1986	−141·5	[1]+14·5	+80·6	+20·2	−9·3	+6·7	−1·0

.. not readily available.
[1] estimated.
Sources: OECD and national sources.

Cigarettes

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the present level of imports of cigarettes into the United Kingdom by main supplying country; and what were the comparable figures in 1986 and 1985.

Mr. Butcher: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom imports of cigarettes

£ million

	10 months to October		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Federal Republic of Germany	38·9	46·2	38·2
Netherlands	10·0	9·1	8·8
Belgium/Luxembourg	5·4	4·3	3·5
Irish Republic	5·7	1·5	3·9
United States of America	4·4	0·5	n/a
Other	2·5	1·7	2·5

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
1. Cigarettes defined as Standard International Trade Classification item 122.2.
2. Provisional figures throughout.

Acrylic Yarn Imports

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the level of imports of acrylic yarn from Turkey in 1985, 1986 and to the latest available date in 1987.

Mr. Butcher: United Kingdom imports of acrylic yarn from Turkey were: 1985, £1·6 million; 1986, £8·1 million; and, for the seven months to July 1987, £5·9 million.

Voluntary Restraint Arrangements

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from the British Textile Confederation, the British Textile Employers' Association, and the Confederation of British Wool Textiles on European Community negotiations with Egypt and Turkey for renewal of voluntary restraint arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Various representations have been received by the Department expressing concern at the level of the voluntary restraint on exports of Egyptian cotton yarn agreed in the recent negotiations between the European Community and the Egyptian authorities, and urging the need for increases in access for cotton yarn and certain other textile products to be kept to a minimum in the negotiations for a voluntary restraint agreement between the European Community and Turkish textile exporters. We have taken note of these representations.

Cotton Yarn

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the outcome of recent negotiations between the European Community and Egypt for renewal of a voluntary restraint arrangement on cotton yarn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: In the recent negotiations between the European Community and Egypt for renewal of the voluntary restraint arrangement on cotton yarn the level for 1988 was agreed at 29,500 tonnes for the Community as a whole, with a growth rate of 3·4 per cent. The United Kingdom share for 1988 is 2,500 tonnes.

The outcome was the best the Community could achieve in the circumstances. Without an agreement the Community market would have been wide open to unrestrained imports of Egyptian cotton yarn.

British Aerospace (Westair Airlines Order)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assistance Her Majesty's Government provided to British Aerospace in connection with its securing an order to supply Westair Airlines of Fresco California with six BAe 146-200 regional airliners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: This order was secured entirely as a result of British Aerospace's marketing skills.

Wood Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give for 1986 the amounts of United Kingdom imports of hard wood, soft wood and other wood products, United Kingdom production of the same, and totals for both categories, respectively, in millions of cubic metres wood raw material equivalent, and expressing each figure as a percentage of apparent domestic consumption.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is contained in the table.

United Kingdom imports of wood 1986

	Hardwood[1]	*Softwood*[1]	*Other wood products*[2]
Domestic consumption	1·4	8·6	n/a
Imports (percentage of domestic consumption)	1·2	6·9	2·4
	(86)	(80)	(n/a)
UK Production	0·3	2·3	n/a
	(21)	(27)	(n/a)

Source: Imports: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Production: Business Monitor 4610.
[1] millions cubic metres.
[2] million metric tonnes.
Notes:
1. Hardwood defined as Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC R2) sub-groups 247·2 and 9 (part); 248·3 and 246·01 (part).
Softwood defined as SITC R2 sub-groups 247·1 and 9 (part); 248·2 and 246·01 (part).
Other wood products defined as SITC R2 sub-groups 245·01 and 02; 246·02 and 03; 248·1 and 22; and Division 63 less sub-groups 633·01 and 02.
2. 1986 imports figures provisional.
3. Domestic consumption calculated by subtracting exports total from UK production figures and adding imports total.
4. Domestic consumption figures for other wood products not available by quantity.

Finance and Banking

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give such figures as are available to him for the latest year available for the aggregate turnover of the financial and banking sector of the economy, broken down *(a)* between institutions operating in the City of London, Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, respectively, *(b)* with income divided into: charges, premiums etc; and simple interest, dividends and rents etc. received, *(c)* with outgoings divided into: salary and associated costs; other operating expenditure on goods, services, rents etc; interest paid out; and dividends distributed and *(d)* between building societies, clearing banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions.

Mr. Maude: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is given in table 8 of the article "National Income and Expenditure in the Second Quarter 1987" which appears in the October 1987 edition of *Economic Trends*.

EC (Internal Market Council)

Mr. Richard Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Internal Market Council held on 30 November.

Mr. Maude: The Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, reached agreement on directives on the approximation of the laws of member states relating to the type approval of wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors; the permissible sound power level of lawnmowers; the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations; and on the transparency of member states' measures regulating the pricing of medicinal products for human use. The Council also adopted decisions to accept on behalf of the Community certain annexes of the international convention on the simplification and harmonisation of Customs procedures — the Kyto convention.

Subject to a United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve the Council reached agreement on the substance of a regulation determining the persons liable for payment of a Customs debt. The Council also discussed proposals for directives on non-life insurance services, on the mutual recognition of member states' professional qualifications, on the approximation of member states' laws on cosmetic products, on good laboratory practice and on procedures for the provision of information by member states on new technical standards. Also discussed were proposals for Community regulations on the control of concentrations between undertakings—the "merger control" regulation —and member states' laws on trade marks.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy toward the role of investment in energy efficiency in inner-city revitalisation, in the light of the recommendations contained in the recent report "Regenerating The Inner City: The Energy Dimension", published by the Association for the Conservation of Energy, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) on 30 November 1987 at column 376.

Electricity

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the average cost of electricity in 1987 prices generated from coal-fired power stations in each of the years 1980 to 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest analysis of comparative generating costs made by the CEGB gave data relating to 1981-82 and 1983-84. This showed the single year generation costs of major coal-fire stations, adjusted to March 1987 prices, to be 2·60p/KWh and 2·67p/KWh respectively.

Anthracite Imports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the level of imports of anthracite annually since 1980.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Annual imports of anthracite into the United Kingdom for each year from 1980 were as shown in the following table:

Anthracite Imports

	('000 tonnes)
1980	321
1981	330
1982	617
1983	672
1984	1,264
1985	1,190
1986	592

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the royalty paid by importing companies to British Coal on anthracite imports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No royalties are paid to British Coal in respect of any imported solid fuels.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give estimates of the total stocks of coal held in Britain in each January from 1980 to January of the current year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total stocks of coal held in the United Kingdom at the beginning of each year from 1980 to 1987 were as shown in the following table.

Total United Kingdom coal stocks at beginning of year
('000 tonnes)

	Stocks
1980	27,908
1981	37,687
1982	42,253
1983	52,377
1984	57,960
1985	36,548
1986	34,979
1987	38,481

Note: These total stock figures include both undistributed and distributed stocks, apart from those distributed stocks held in merchants' yards, etc., mainly for the domestic market, and those held by the industrial sector.

Research and Development

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give a breakdown, by country and by English region, of his Department's total expenditure on research and development, as shown in the latest edition of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development".

Mr. Parkinson: No. A breakdown of expenditure by my Department on research and development of the kind the hon. Member requests is not available and cannot be produced without disproportionate costs.

SCOTLAND

Mortality

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express the number of deaths in Scotland of those aged 65 years and over which occurred in the months October to March as a percentage of those which occurred in the previous six months, for each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths of persons aged 65 and over registered in October to March as a percentage of those registered in the previous six months, Scotland, 1974-75 to 1986-87

Year	*Deaths October to March*	*Percentage of previous six months*
1974-75	24,653	116·3
1975-76	25,759	123·1
1976-77	24,071	117·3
1977-78	25,219	119·4
1978-79	25,648	119·5
1979-80	24,828	113·6
1980-81	24,743	113·2
1981-82	27,649	126·9
1982-83	25,911	120·0
1983-84	24,806	114·3
1984-85	25,239	116·4
1985-86	27,243	122·5
1986-87	24,478	108·6

Note: Deaths are processed by month of registration.

M8

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many stretches on the M8 are currently coned off; what is the length of each stretch; how long it has been restricted; and when it is expected to be returned to normal.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are six lane closures on the length of M8 for which the Secretary of State is responsible. Details are as follows:

Lothian Region

Livingston interchange (A899)—two closures for bridge repairs, westbound fast lane 600 m, eastbound fast lane 900 m, introduced 23 October, expected to end spring 1988.

Blackburn to Bathgate road (B792)—one closure for bridge repairs, westbound fast lane 2·5 km, introduced Autumn 1987, to end 3 December.

Strathclyde Region

East of Newhouse interchange (A73), approximately 1 km of the eastbound slow lane is coned off from 9 am to 4 pm each day to effect repairs to the surfacing, the start point coinciding with the previous day's finishing point. Work started on 16 November, expected to end before Christmas.

M8 Viaduct over the White Cart Water (east of Glasgow airport interchange)—two closures for bridge repairs, 1,300 m of eastbound slow lane from 25 November to 18 December, and 1,400 m of westbound slow lane from 26 November to 4 December.

Homelessness

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make any additional funds available to local authorities to deal with the problem of homelessness during the current year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for local authorities to determine how best to deploy consent allocated to them for capital expenditure on housing. My right hon. and learned Friend took into account, however, local authorities' responsibilities for the homeless when making very substantially increased housing allocations in 1987-88. In addition, in October, Scottish housing authorities received £3·6 million supplementary allocations—not paralleled in England—for expenditure on their own housing stock.

In the expectation of underspends by English local authorities of allocations issued for financial year 1987-88, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced this week a redistribution of resources which will allow English authorities to devote an additional £25 million to projects specifically designed to alleviate the problems of homelessness. No corresponding underspends are expected in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications have been made for accommodation in Scotland under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act during 1987; and what is the average size of families making such applications.

Mr. Rifkind: Statistics on applications under the homeless persons legislation are returned to the Scottish Development Department by local authorities on a financial year basis. Although a small number of authorities have not yet completed the processing of figures for 1986-87, the returns submitted to date show just over 21,700 applications. No information is collected on the size of applicant households.

Health Care (Tayside)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for the accumulated debt owed to Tayside health board by private patients since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the terms requested.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many of the new full-time staff employed by the National Health Service in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area are filling vacancies: (i) left by retirement or other similar causes, and (ii) new posts;

(2) how many (i) doctors, (ii) nurses and (iii) other staff were involved in operations performed on National Health Service patients in *(a)* the Tayside health board area and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area in 1986; and what were the numbers performing similar operations in each year since 1974.

Mr. Forsyth: This information is not readily available, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Council and SSHA House Sales

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many homes in Scotland formerly owned by (i) local authorities and (ii) housing associations excluding the Scottish Special Housing Association have been sold to private owners during that part of 1987 for which figures are available;

(2) how many homes in Scotland formerly owned by (i) local authorities and (ii) housing associations excluding

the Scottish Special Housing Association had been sold to private owners by 31 December 1986; and what percentage this figure represents of the total Scottish public housing stock;

(3) how many homes in Scotland formerly owned by the Scottish Special Housing Association had been sold to private owners by 31 December 1986; and how many have been sold during that part of the 1987 for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: Statistics on house sales are published quarterly in Scottish Development Department statistical bulletins on housing trends, copies of which are sent to all Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies. The information requested is set out in the table.

Housing sales to sitting tenants

	Up to 31 December 1986	*1 January to 30 June 1987*
Local Authorities	66,432	5,619
Housing Associations	96	6
SSHA	15,188	925

Sales by local authorities and housing associations by 31 December 1986 were equivalent to 7·9 per cent. of the total Scottish public housing stock as at 30 September 1979, ie including SSHA and new towns but excluding housing associations.

Housing (Standards)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homes in Scotland were defined as being below the tolerable standard in 1979, 1983 and at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The numbers of houses below the tolerable standard, as reported by local authorities to the Scottish Development Department, are set out in the table.

Number of dwellings below the tolerable standard

Year	*Estimated number at 31 March*
1979	121,000
1983	81,000
1987	55,000

These figures include estimates for those authorities which have not yet submitted their returns.

Housing (Grant)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing (i) in cash terms and (ii) in real terms based on constant 1986-87 prices the total level of *(a)* housing association grant and *(b)* revenue deficit grant paid by his Department to the Scottish housing associations in each of the last eight years for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is given in the table.

At 1986-87 prices

	(i) Cash terms	*(ii) Real terms*
Housing association grant		
1979-80	35,527,847	59,141,123
1980-81	50,602,731	71,050,295
1981-82	82,417,509	105,391,886
1982-83	104,176,001	124,270,548
1983-84	115,749,586	132,006,142
1984-85	127,678,262	139,468,968
1985-86	104,624,393	107,776,866
1986-87[1]	106,569,494	106,569,494
Revenue deficit grant		
1979-80	482,255	802,781
1980-81	1,202,262	1,688,072
1981-82	1,305,949	1,669,990
1982-83	1,023,628	1,221,075
1983-84	542,314	618,479
1984-85	283,858	310,071
1985-86	415,007	427,511
1986-87[1]	571,097	571,097
Hostel deficit grant[2]		
1979-80	348,689	580,442
1980-81	116,289	163,279
1981-82	59,767	76,427
1982-83	131,447	156,801
1983-84	181,101	206,535
1984-85	122,074	133,347
1985-86	60,638	62,465
1986-87[1]	18,870	18,870

[1] Base year.
[2] Part of revenue deficit grant.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of total payments to Scottish local authorities by his Department for housing purposes has been made up of housing support grant in each of the last eight years for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: Housing support grant payments as a percentage of total housing payments to Scottish local authorities is as follows:

	percentage
1982-83	81
1983-84	63
1984-85	53
1985-86	50
1986-87	34
[1]1987-88	33

[1] Estimate.

Information for 1980-81 and 1981-82 is not available on a comparable basis.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of district and islands councils' housing revenue account budgets was made up of housing support grant in each of the last eight years for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is given in the table.

Year	*percentage*
1980-81	37·2
1981-82	24·9
1982-83	15·5
1983-84	10·8
1984-85	9·6
1985-86	9·1
1986-87	6·1
1987-88	6·1

Notes:
(1) Figures for 1980-81 to 1983-84 are based on audited accounts.
(2) Figures for 1984-85 to 1986-87 are based on authorities' near actual outturn returns.
(3) Figures for 1987-88 are based on authorities' estimates.

Housing

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of (i) completed new builds and (ii) new builds commenced by *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* housing associations in each of the last eight years for which records are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested was published in Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin HSIU No. 31 "Housing Trends in Scotland: Quarter ended 31 March 1987", copies of which were sent to all Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies.

Transport (Privatisation)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any plans to privatise *(a)* the Scottish Transport Group and *(b)* Caledonian Macbrayne; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend always has under review options, including privatisation, for the future structure of nationalised industries within his responsibility

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will calculate the estimated housing expenditure for 1988-89 in the housing revenue account, rent, housing support grant and RFL; and if he will recalculate this estimate on the basis of the ratios of spending on rent, housing support grant and RFL in the 1979-80 financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Final decisions on the level of housing support grant and rate fund contribution limits for 1988-89 will not be taken until later this month when my right hon. and learned Friend has completed his consideration of representations made by COSLA and individual local authorities. Decisions on 1988-89 rent levels are for local authorities themselves to take.

Council Houses

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give (i) the estimated number of council houses in Scotland in each year since 1979, (ii) the average annual cost per house and (iii) the percentage of costs funded by: *(a)* rents, *(b)* housing support grant and *(c)* rate fund contribution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table.

Year	Number of council houses	Average annual cost per house[2] (£)	Percentage of costs funded by[1] (a) Rents per cent.	(b) Housing support grant per cent.	(c) Rate fund contribution per cent.
1979–80	893,500	580	44·1	41·2	14·1
1980–81	893,800	687	44·5	37·2	12·9
1981–82	892,100	730	54·8	24·9	16·3
1982–83	884,200	764	61·4	15·5	18·5
1983–84	874,500	763	67·1	10·8	17·7
1984–85	862,500	810	67·2	9·6	19·9
1985–86	852,700	831	72·2	9·1	13·7
1986–87	842,800	865	78·1	6·1	10·5
1987–88[3]	831,000	916	83·2	6·1	5·7

[1] The sum of the percentages shown does not equal 100 per cent.; the balance comprises items of other income.
[2] Based on outturn aggregate housing revenue account expenditure.
[3] Estimates.

Rents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the average weekly rents in Scotland for each year since 1979 including the 1988-89 projected figure, *(b)* the percentage increase over the previous year and *(c)* the percentage increase over the base year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

	Average weekly rent in Scottish local authorities £	Percentage rent increase over previous years per cent.	Percentage rent increase over the base year per cent.
1979-80	4·92	11·3	—
1980-81	5·88	19·5	19·5
1981-82	7·69	30·8	56·3
1982-83	9·02	17·3	83·3
1983-84	9·86	9·3	100·4
1984-85	10·46	6·1	112·6
1985-86	11·54	10·3	134·6
1986-87	12·99	12·6	164·0
1987-88 (Estimate)	14·65	12·8	197·8

The average rent level in 1988-89 will depend on local authorities' decisions about rent increases.

Rates

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will *(a)* give the aggregate rate fund contributions for Scotland in each year since 1979, including the provision 1988-89 figure, *(b)* reprice the above for inflation, *(c)* give the total budgeted RFL

expenditure and *(d)* reprice *(c)* for inflation; and if he will give *(a)* as a percentage of *(c)* and *(b)* as a percentage of *(d)*.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table.

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[1]	*1988-89*[2]
Aggregate Rate Fund Contributions (£ million)	72·9	79·4	106·3	124·7	117·9	139·1	97·3	76·2	43·6	20·8
Aggregate Rate Fund Contributions at September 1987 prices (£ million)	126·8	116·5	142·0	155·4	140·5	158·8	104·7	79·6	43·6	—
Budgeted Rate Fund Contributions (£ million)	75·6	88·3	117·2	121·8	124·8	119·9	89·3	69·5	43·6	—
Budgeted Rate Fund Contributions at September 1987 prices (£ million)	131·5	129·6	156·6	151·8	148·7	136·9	96·1	72·6	43·6	—
Aggregate Rate Fund Contribution as a percentage of Budgeted Rate Fund Contribution (per cent.)	96	90	91	106	95	112	108	109	100	—
Aggregate Rate Fund Contribution as a percentage of Budgeted Rate Fund Contribution at September 1987 prices (per cent.)	96	90	91	106	95	112	108	109	100	—

[1] Local authorities March 1987 estimates of rate fund contributions.
[2] Provisional rate fund contribution limit.

Gifts in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any further items have been accepted in lieu of tax in the current financial year.

Mr. Rifkind: I am pleased to announce that the following item has been accepted in lieu of tax:

Item	*Amount of tax satisfied* £
Portrait of John Gray of Carntyne by Sir Henry Raeburn	96,250

The portrait has been allocated to the national galleries of Scotland temporarily while the question of permanent allocation is being considered.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered disabled people were unemployed *(a)* three years ago, *(b)* two years ago and *(c)* one year ago; and what is the most recent figure.

Mr. Lee: The number of registered disabled people who are unemployed claimants at unemployment benefit offices is not available. However, the table shows the number of unemployed registered disabled people in Great Britain registered for employment at jobcentres and careers offices at October of each year since 1985 and for September 1984. The figure for October 1984 is not available.

	Number
7 September 1984	35,189
4 October 1985	29,009
3 October 1986	25,539
2 October 1987	21,769

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of unemployment for disabled people; and what is the average length of unemployment for able-bodied people.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of registered disabled people were unemployed in *(a)* June 1979, *(b)* June 1983 and *(c)* June 1987; and what is the most recent figure.

Mr. Lee: Information on the number of registered disabled people who are unemployed claimants at unemployment benefit offices is not available. However, the number of unemployed registered disabled people in Great Britain registered for employment at jobcentres and careers offices for the closest month to June of the requested years and the latest figure are as follows:

	Numbers
12 July 1979	60,381
3 June 1983	69,544
3 July 1987	24,350
2 October 1987	21,769

The figures are not directly compatible due to the ending of compulsory registration at jobcentres in October 1982.

The numbers of disabled people in Great Britain registered under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, which are counted annually in April are:

	Numbers
April 1979	482,006
April 1983	433,177
April 1987	383,439

Adjudication Officers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional support staff for unemployment benefit adjudication officers have been appointed, following recommendations of the chief adjudication officer's annual report.

Mr. Lee: The chief adjudication officer first recommended an increase in support staff for adjudication officers in his annual report for 1984-85. Since the period covered by that report my Department has conducted an internal survey into the organisation of the adjudication service. In the two years since that survey, some 90 additional clerical and secretarial staff have been introduced to support the work of adjudication officers.

Employment Opportunities (Barking and Dagenham)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *232*, if Westminster city council has sought any advice from his Department concerning *(a)* employment prospects in Barking and Dagenham for people previously resident in Westminster but to be housed temporarily in Barking, *(b)* the availability of his Department's programmes for people previously resident in Westminster but to be housed temporarily in Barking, *(c)* the availability of Manpower Services Commission programmes for people previously resident in Westminster but to be housed temporarily in Barking and *(d)* general employment matters in Barking and Dagenham.

Mr. Lee: My Department is not aware of any requests for advice having been made to it by Westminster city council in relation to any of the matters in the question.

Local Office Staff

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will supply figures for staffing levels in the unemployment benefit offices in the Bristol area, listing vacancies by grade.

Mr. Lee: There are 267 staff employed in unemployment benefit offices in the city of Bristol area. There are currently no vacancies at any grade.

Benefit Claimants

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of claimants whose unemployment benefit is suspended pending inquiry in the Bristol area.

Mr. Lee: There are no records maintaned to show the number of suspensions of unemployment benefit.

However, statistics for the third quarter of 1987 show that in the Bristol sector adjudication office area 6,081 cases on which a question of doubt arose were decided by an adjudication officer.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will institute an inquiry into the series of decisions made by the unemployment benefit office in Bristol which led to Ms. Rachel Caine's entitlement to unemployment benefit being suspended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Following the very sad death of Ms. Caine, I have asked my officials to examine the circumstances of her recent claim to unemployment benefit and to report their conclusions to me.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime (Inner Cities)

10. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce crime in the inner cities.

Mr. John Patten: We shall continue our efforts to reduce crime with a range of appropriate measures—first, by strengthening the manpower available to the police and encouraging chief officers to deploy more officers on the streets. Second, through the ministerial group on crime prevention a range of initiatives is under way to promote crime prevention in inner urban areas. Thirdly, the Home Office five towns initiative has shown the value of bringing key public, private and voluntary sector agencies together in combating crime. We are now urgently studying how best to promote this co-operative, locally based, approach in the inner cities.

Extradition

15. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the proposed changes in the extradition laws contained in the Criminal Justice Bill [*Lords*].

Mr. John Patten: We have received five letters.

Visas

16. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent developments regarding the operation of the visa system for visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The extension of visa requirements to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria is working well. The Government are always prepared to consider suggestions for improvements in the operation of the system, but we have no intention of reversing the arrangements.

Remand Prisoners

17. **Mr. Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with custodial arrangements for prisoners on remand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No, which is why, in addition to other measures, we have started on the biggest building and refurbishment programme of prisons this century, provided for further bail hostels places, built new courts, appointed additional judges and set time limits on the remand period before trial.

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average time spent on remand in custody awaiting trial at the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. John Patten: The average number of days spent in custody by untried prisoners received in 1986 was 57 for males and 44 for females.

40. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on measures to reduce the remand population.

Mr. John Patten: The size of the remand population is affected both by increasing use of remands in custody and increases in the time taken to deal with cases. We are taking action on both fronts. Work is being done by the probation service and the Vera Institute of Justice on providing magistrates with better information on defendants through bail information schemes. Resources are being provided over the next three financial years for about nine new bail hostels. On the time taken to deal with cases, we have urged magistrates and their clerks to concentrate on efforts to reduce delays. The management information system which we are introducing to the service will assist courts to monitor their performance. We have also introduced statutory time limits on custody cases in pilot areas. We hope to extend this next year. The Criminal Justice Bill's proposals to allow courts in certain circumstances to remand a defendant in custody for up to 28 days should lead to a reduction in the number of fruitless remand hearings.

Crime Prevention

18. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he plans to take to encourage further crime prevention schemes on industrial estates.

Mr. John Patten: As an example of the co-operative approach we support, the National Westminster bank is currently sponsoring an extensive scheme in Milton Keynes aimed at establishing industry watches on local factory estates. I am also aware of the success of a similar scheme in the hon. Member's constituency, on the North Lynn industrial estate. These are examples of the activity we are keen to disseminate as good practice for others to follow.

38. **Mr. Budgen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on progress on the implementation of the various crime prevention initiatives recently undertaken.

Mr. John Patten: A wide range of crime prevention initiatives are successfully under way at both national and local level. The energy and enthusiasm of those concerned is evident and we are determined that this should be further encouraged and that where initiatives are successful in preventing and reducing crime and in reducing the fear of crime, experience and good practice is made known to all. At national level, the ministerial group on crime prevention and the standing conference on crime prevention have important roles in exchanging ideas and co-ordinating policies. To support and encourage crime prevention work locally we hope shortly to announce details of a new crime prevention organisation.

53. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy on crime prevention of the latest figures of recorded crime.

Mr. John Patten: The recorded crime figures for the 12 months to the end of June 1987 show an increase of 3 per cent. compared with the previous 12 months. This is appreciably less than the 6 per cent. average annual increase between 1980 and 1986. There was a fall in thefts from shops, and the increase in burglaries was well below the long term rate of increase. This is encouraging because these are both types of offence which can be prevented.

Crime prevention will therefore continue to play an important part in our efforts to reduce crime. We will continue to encourage all those who can help to prevent crime to take appropriate action.

Remands

19. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for improving the quality of information provided by the police to magistrates courts when making decisions about whether to remand in custody or on bail.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police are already aware of the need to provide the Crown Prosecution Service with all information in their possession relevant to the decision whether or not to oppose bail. In addition, the probation service has run pilot schemes in certain areas, in which they have provided magistrates, through the Crown Prosecution Service, with detailed information about a defendant's suitability for bail. I am keeping a close eye on the progress of these schemes, with a view to evaluating the case for their extension.

Shoplifting

20. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to bring forward crime prevention initiatives to deal with the problem of shoplifting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: During the last two years a working group of the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention has been looking at the question of shop theft. Over 3,000 copies of the group's report have now been issued, mainly to members of the retail trade. The majority of the report's recommendations are directed at the retail trade itself and we therefore welcome the group's most recent suggestion that the trade should mount a national publicity campaign aimed at informing the individual retailer of the problem of shop theft and the measures by which he can protect himself. We hope very much that such a campaign will be launched.

Mentally Ill Prisoners

22. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct an inquiry into those cases where convicted prisoners, who are awaiting sentence but are also mentally ill, have to spend time in prison rather than being committed to a secure or other psychiatric unit.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We do not think that there are grounds for establishing a general inquiry of this kind. As my right hon. Friend stated in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 30 November a joint Home Office—DHSS working party was set up last year to look at the problems presented by mentally disordered offenders in prison in England and Wales, including those awaiting sentence. It made a number of recommendations, including that steps should be taken to ensure that the courts are fully aware of the non-custodial options open to them, particularly their powers of remand to hospital for report or treatment under the Mental Health Act 1983 and the facilities available in the health system. We shall be acting on these recommendations. In the meantime, if my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, I hope he will let me know.

Commission for Racial Equality

23. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future funding of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. John Patten: Current provision for grant-in-aid to the Commission for Racial Equality is £10,845,000 in 1987-88 and £11,116,000 in 1988-89.

Independent Television

24. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss the future of the independent television network.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority regularly to discuss matters of current interest. The future of the independent television network is a matter discussed with him before and we expect to discuss it with him again at some point.

Firearms

25. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received in connection with proposed changes to the firearms laws.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) earlier today.

Concessionary Television Licences

26. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to extend to people who are deaf or hard of hearing the arrangements for a concessionary television licence which apply to the registered blind.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to do so.

Drug Abuse

27. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent initiatives being co-ordinated through his Department to combat drug misuse and trafficking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government continue to intensify their campaign against drugs. The Home Office programme to help finance overseas projects relevant to this campaign will be increased from £500,000 to £2 million next year. Schemes under consideration include working with the United Nations fund for drug abuse control in its plan to reduce drug abuse and trafficking in India, to support law enforcement projects in the coca growing countries of Latin America, and assistance to West Africa, which is emerging as a major drug trafficking route.

We are continuing to boost the resources available to the police and Customs in the fight against drugs. Since May 1986 17 dedicated drugs wings have been added to regional crime squads in England and Wales, with 221 additional police officers to man them. The strengthening of the national drugs intelligence unit will continue in 1988-89, with an increase in staff to improve international

liaison, and provision for a six-man drugs profit confiscation team. On the Customs side there will be about 450 additional staff allocated to Customs work in 1988-89, mainly on the prevention of drug smuggling. Three hundred and sixty will be employed on preventive controls on passengers and freight at ports and airports, and some 90 investigation, prosecution and support staff will be added to strengthen drug investigations, including the tracing of assets of traffickers suspected of drug smuggling.

Under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the High Court had by 2 December made 140 restraint or charging orders, freezing assets of the order of £7 million, and the first confiscation orders are beginning to be made as cases work their way through the Crown court.

Neighbourhood Watch

28. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes are currently operating in Luton.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that there are now about 240 such schemes.

44. **Mr. John Greenaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the growth in numbers of neighbourhood watch schemes, with particular regard to their quality and the results that are being obtained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Neighbourhood watch is essentially a local initiative and the number of schemes throughout England and Wales has grown to over 42,000 in just five years. The quality and effectiveness of schemes in preventing crime and reducing the fear of crime inevitably varies. It is important that experience and examples of good practice are shared and to this end the Home Office is preparing fresh guidance for the police and the public on the implementation and maintenance of schemes.

48. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report the progress of neighbourhood watch schemes; and what is his latest estimate of the number of schemes in operation in the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1982 neighbourhood watch has flourished to such an extent that there are now over 42,000 schemes in England and Wales including some 7,500 in the Metropolitan police area. Many of the schemes have been instigated by members of the public and it is this emphasis on the involvement of all members of the community to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime that makes neighbourhood watch an important element of our overall crime prevention strategy. We shall continue to encourage the growth of these schemes.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

29. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects there to be a meeting with officials of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a meeting at present.

Local Radio

30. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the implications for his policy on local radio for the future prospects of Radio West Midlands.

Mr. Renton: A number of responses to our Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" expressed concern about the withdrawal of BBC local radio services in general, even though the Green Paper made clear the Government's view that, while the BBC would have to judge the extent of its commitment to local radio alongside the other claims on its resources, there continued to be a case for the provision of public service sound broadcasting at local level by the BBC.

Sunday Trading

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been found guilty of offences under the Sunday trading laws over the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information, which may be incomplete, is given in the table.

Defendants found guilty of offences in relation to Sunday trading under the Shops Act 1950
England and Wales

Year	*Number of persons found guilty*
1982	382
1983	496
1984	720
1985	594
1986	543

51. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to introduce legislation on Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: We are considering possible options for changes in the law but legislation is unlikely to be introduced in the present Session.

Convicted Murderers

32. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total annual cost of keeping all the prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons who have been convicted of murder.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible to distinguish the costs of keeping different types of prisoner in custody. The average annual cost of keeping a person in a penal establishment in 1986-87, the latest financial year for which information is available, was £13,104.

Capital Punishment

33. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in support of urgent legislation for the restoration of capital punishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We receive many letters on the general issue of capital punishment from hon. Members and from the public, expressing all shades of opinion.

Prisons

34. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners of black and ethnic minority origin are currently held in British prisons.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information for England and Wales is given in the following table. The information is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", Table 1.13 of the 1986 issue, Cmnd. 210, copies of which are in the Library.

Estimated population in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1987: by ethnic origin

Ethnic origin	[1]*Number of prisoners*
White	41,940
West Indian, Guyanese, African	4,730
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	1,330
Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin	990
Other, not recorded (including refusals)	1,280
All persons	50,270

[1] Provisional data.

35. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current cost of maintaining a person in prison for a year.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986-87, the latest financial year for which information is available, the average annual cost of keeping a person in a penal establishment was £13,104.

36. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently serving sentences of less than one week in Winson Green prison, Birmingham.

Mr. John Patten: On Wednesday 2 December five people were serving sentences of less than seven days at Winson Green prison.

Procurement of Males

37. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions of men in each of the last three years for procurement of males under the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Data in the form requested are not collected centrally. The readily available information is given in the following table:

Males aged 21 or over proceeded against and found guilty of procuring or attempting to procure or being party to the commission by a man under 21 of an act of gross indecency with another man.

England and Wales

Year	*Proceeded against*	*Found guilty*
1984	15	18[1]
1985	106	98
1986	37	37

[1] Includes some against whom proceedings were begun in previous years.

Fresh Start

39. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implementation of new Fresh Start working practices in the prison system.

49. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison establishments are now operating the Fresh Start working practices.

Mr. John Patten: Fresh Start working has now been implemented at 102 establishments. At the remainder management and staff are working towards the conclusion of local agreements to enable Fresh Start to be implemented.

46. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what benefits he foresees for the prison service from the introduction of the Fresh Start working practices.

Mr. John Patten: Fresh Start is intended to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and economy with which the prison service discharges its public service. The new working arrangements match resources more closely to the work needs of establishments; and provide more responsive and flexible systems, improved accountability, and the opportunity for managers to manage more effectively. For prison officers, the new working practices bring reduced hours, predictable attendance patterns, improved job continuity and satisfaction and increased basic pay. For inmates, Fresh Start aims to provide a sound organisational basis for the enhanced delivery of regimes.

Tamils

41. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the Tamils who were disembarked at London airport subsequent to undressing *(a)* have since left the United Kingdom, *(b)* have been allowed leave to enter or *(c)* have cases still under consideration.

Mr. Renton: Decisions have been taken in respect of four of the 64 Tamils in question. One of those concerned has been refused asylum and returned to Sri Lanka; the other three, who have also been refused asylum, have applied for judicial review of the decision. The case is currently before the House of Lords. Decisions on the following 60 cases are awaiting the judgment in that case.

Women Police Constables

42. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of woman police constables recruited in the last three years, and the number who have left the service during the same period.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Women Police Constables
(All forces in England and Wales)

Year	*Recruitment*	*Wastage*
1984	861	818
1985	1,071	815
1986	1,297	841
[1]1987	1,176	574

[1] 1 January to 30 September.

Electricity Meters

43. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make it a criminal offence to be in possession of equipment designed illegally to tamper with domestic electricity meters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No. Depending on the circumstances, a person found in possession of such equipment could already be charged with attempting, conspiring or inciting another person to commit an offence; or with aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring an offence, contrary to section 1 (theft) or section 13 (abstracting of electricity) of the Theft Act 1968; or with conspiracy to defraud.

West Midlands Police

45. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to authorise an increase in the establishment of the West Midlands police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend will consider the needs of the West Midlands police in the light of progress in the civilianisation programme in the force, the applications received from the police authority, and the assessment of them by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary.

Nationality

47. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of hardship suffered by elderly and unemployed people of African, Caribbean and Asian origin as a result of the requirement to pay £60 in order to register under the Nationality Act; if he will waive the charge in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members about constituents who say they cannot afford the fee. There is, however, no requirement for registration, and failure to apply, for whatever reason, will not affect immigration status or existing rights to social security benefits, local authority housing, medical treatment under the National Health Service or voting. We do not therefore believe that any hardship will result. There is no power to waive the fee in particular cases.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

50. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last met the commissioner on 19 October. They discussed a number of policing issues of concern to the Metropolitan police, such as the carrying of knives and the controls on firearms.

Minors (Abduction)

52. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the remedies for those affected by the illegal taking overseas of minors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We receive letters from time to time from or on behalf of parents whose children have been taken abroad against their wishes. Under the Child Abduction Act 1984, it is a criminal offence for a parent to take or send a child out of the United Kingdom without the consent of the other parent. Civil remedies for the return of abducted children from abroad—for example, under the provisions of the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985—are a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Football Violence

54. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to improve the standard of public order at Football League matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The maintenance of public order at Football League matches is the responsibility of the police, whose unremitting efforts have led to a significant improvement in crowd behaviour over the last two years. We have strengthened police powers through the controls on alcohol and the provisions of the Public Order Act 1986. On 1 August, part IV of that Act also gave the courts new powers to make an exclusion order against any person convicted of a football-related offence.

We are determined to make further progress, in partnership with the football authorities and the clubs themselves. The clubs are extending the use of closed-circuit television, which has played a major part in the improved behaviour at football grounds, and are being strongly encouraged to introduce effective membership card schemes. Progress is monitored by a working group chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport.

Toys (Advertising)

55. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to restrict the advertising of children's toys on television prior to Christmas.

Mr. Renton: The statutory requirements governing broadcast advertisements are of long standing and we have no present plans to amend them.

Prison Industries

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the turnover and *(b)* the profit or loss of prison industries in the latest available year.

Mr. John Patten: The last finalised accounts for prison industries were for the year 1985-86. Turnover for that year was £23·5 million, and the loss £25·5 million. Final accounts for 1986-87 are not yet available, but provisional figures are a turnover of £26·1 million and a loss in the region of £18·5 million.

Lindholme Prison

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the present maximum number of prisoners that Her Majesty's prison Lindholme accommodates; and if he has any plans to increase this number;

(2) if he has any plans to keep prisoners in Her Majesty's prison Lindholme of different categories from those held there at present.

Mr. John Patten: The maximum number of inmates that can presently be accommodated in uncrowded

conditions in Her Majesty's prison Lindholme is 750. A further 250 places are due to become available towards the end of this year and will be brought into operation when extra staff are in post and the necessary preparations have been completed. That is expected to be in late March next year. We have no plans to introduce prisoners other than those in security categories C and D as at present.

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that all prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Lindholme have a release date.

Mr. John Patten: So far as we are aware, all prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Lindholme have been notified, in accordance with standing orders, of their earliest and latest dates of release and of the dates on which, if they are eligible for consideration for parole, they might, if selected, be released on licence. Delays can occur, however, for a variety of reasons, in reaching decisions on parole. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, perhaps he could let me know.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Hurd: The information relating to staff in post as at 1 November 1987 is as follows:

Grade 2: Criminal, Constitutional and Statistical Departments and Research and Planning Unit:
Three grade 3s, and 708 other staff.

Grade 2: Police Department (including Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Forensic Science Service and Scientific Research and Development Branch):
Three grade 3s, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Controller, Forensic Science Service, and 2,641 other staff.

Grade 2: Broadcasting and Miscellaneous, Equal Opportunities and General, Immigration and Nationality and Passport Departments:
Four grade 3s, and 4,417 other staff.

Principal Establishment Officer: Establishment, Fire and Emergency Planning, Finance and Manpower Departments:
Three grade 3s, one director of information services and 1,887 other staff.

Legal Adviser
Two principal assistant legal advisers (Grade 3) and 26 other staff.

Director-General of the Prison Service:
One Deputy Director-General, three grade 3s, one Director, Prison Medical Services, and 27,795 other staff.

Television Advertising (Alcohol)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on alcohol advertising on television in the past three years.

Mr. Renton: About 30, the majority of which have been received this year.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to exempt electoral registration officers from the requirement to sell the electoral register in machine readable form to any person who pays the correct fee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Representation of the People Regulations 1986 require electoral registration officers, on payment of a prescribed fee, to supply electoral registration data only to those people who are entitled to free copies of the printed register, that is, those who need it in connection with elections. Electoral registration officers are not required to supply the data to any other person, though they may do so on payment of a higher prescribed fee.

Fires

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each of the last five years the number of fires which have required attention by the public fire services which have been caused by cigarettes; and what proportion of fires requiring the attention of the public fire services are caused by cigarettes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information relates to fires, other than minor fires, attended by local authority fire brigades. Detailed information on the source of ignition of those fires is published annually in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom" (Tables 34 and 61 of the latest issue for 1985) copies of which are in the Library. The information on accidental fires ignited by smokers materials (other than matches) is brought together in the following table.

Accidental fires where the source of ignition was reported as smokers' materials other than matches[1]

	Number of fires	*Percentage*[2]
1981	9,374	8·0
1982	10,125	8·4
1983	10,624	8·8
1984	11,541	9·1
1985	11,395	9·0

[1] Mainly cigarettes, but also cigars and pipe debris.
[2] Percentage of all accidental fires attended (excluding minor fires).
Figures for 1986 will be available later this month.

Prisoners (Body Belts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed consideration of Sir Montague Levine's report on the use of body belts on prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Sir Montague Levine, Assistant Deputy Coroner for the inner south district of Greater London, wrote to the prison department on 31 July 1987 following an inquest into the death of a former inmate of Wormwood Scrubs prison. In the course of the evidence it had been found that a body belt had been used to enable the inmate — who had been violent and had been unwilling to consent to the administration of a sedative — to be transferred from the hospital at Wormwood Scrubs to the hospital at Brixton prison. The inquest had heard that it was the usual practice of medical staff at

Wormwood Scrubs not to sedate a patient in the absence of consent unless the need to do so had been confirmed by an independent consultant psychiatrist, but that difficulty had been experienced in the past in obtaining the services of a consultant at short notice.

In his letter Sir Montague Levine made no recommendation about the use of body belts, but he did report the jury's view that a rota system should be employed to ensure that help from a consultant psychiatrist could be obtained at all times. In the light of Sir Montague's letter the principal medical officer in charge of medical services at Wormwood Scrubs has been asked to seek the agreement of the appropriate psychiatric hospital to medical staff at the establishment having access to consultant psychiatrists on the hospital's duty rota for emergencies, including those occurring at weekends.

Juvenile Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will commission a study into the creation of an appointments system for the juvenile courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There have been recent research studies on the management of magistrates' courts business. We intend to publish the results shortly, with a commentary on the lessons which emerge including those on listing practices. We doubt whether an appointments system for individual cases would be practicable in juvenile courts, as in all magistrates' courts, because it is difficult to predict how long a case will last.

Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 20 November, if he will give separately the number of police in the Carlisle city sub-division for each year since 1977.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Cumbria that this information is not available. Police officers are deployed throughout the whole of the northern division, which covers both Carlisle city and Carlisle rural sub-divisions, as operational circumstances demand.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the total number of guns held by each police force; and what steps his Department takes to monitor these numbers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to questions from the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 30 November at column *395*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis as to the reasons why the Metropolitan Police now record only the number of operations in which guns are authorised rather than the actual number of weapons issued; if he will seek to change this practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A joint study carried out by Home Office officials and police representatives in 1983 concluded that the figures for the police use of firearms collected in 1982 were not reliable because they reflected wide variations in the interpretation of what should and should not be recorded.

As a result all forces were asked to submit to the Home Office annually details of the number of operations and not occasions in which firearms were issued. A more detailed compilation of firearms statistics has been considered but no justification could be found for the considerable extra resources such an elaborate system would require both within police forces and the Home Office. There are no plans at present to change the criteria for recording statistics relating to the issue and use of police firearms.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in Leicestershire were issued with firearms in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 58 officers of Leicestershire constabulary were issued with firearms.

Draize Test

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he is satisfied that laboratories using the Draize eye irritancy test are conforming to his Department's guidelines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he takes to monitor compliance by animal experiment laboratories with his Department's guidelines on *(a)* the Draize eye irritancy test and *(b)* other experimental tests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Implementation of the Home Office guidelines on the Draize eye test, like all aspects of the control of the use of animals in experiments or other scientific procedures, is closely monitored by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate. We are satisfied that the introduction of the guidelines on the operation of the Draize eye test has played a major part in the adoption of best practice in the conduct of this test.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the BIOS consultancy and contract research laboratory at Bagshot in Surrey is still performing experiments on live animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not our practice to reveal where work licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is carried out.

Immigration

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he expects to announce the conclusions of his review of the arrangements for hon. and right hon. Members' interventions on immigration cases which he announced on 16 November, *Official Report*, column 789.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing to add to my reply of 23 November to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) at column *57*.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office obtains its stationery from Her Majesty's Stationery Office, including brown envelopes, paper bags and toilet tissue containing recycled paper. More general use is inhibited by the much greater cost of recycled paper. The Department arranges for local authorities and private contractors to collect waste paper for recycling where it is economic to do so.

Television Licences

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton will receive a reply to his letter to him dated 18 September, following correspondence involving his Department, Melton borough council and the National Television Licence Records Office, which has continued since March, on the subject of residential care television licences.

Mr. Renton: The application by Melton borough council for accommodation for residential care licences to which this correspondence relates has raised legal issues concerning the application of the relevant statutory regulations. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as these have been resolved.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for changing the privileges to which unconvicted remand prisoners are entitled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The unconvicted prisoners' food privilege is to be withdrawn with effect from 1 March 1988. That is announced today and the reasons explained, in the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's report on the state and use of prisons.

Strip Searches

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many strip searches were carried out on men serving sentences of imprisonment during each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many strip searches were carried out on women serving sentences of imprisonment in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many strip searches were carried out on unconvicted male prisoners in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many strip searches were carried out on unconvicted female prisoners in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available.

DNA Tests

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have taken part in DNA blood testing; and in how many cases the claimed relationships have been proved by this method.

Mr. Renton: The commissioning of reports on relationships based on DNA tests is a private arrangement between the individuals concerned and the testers. Outcomes are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute a research programme designed to increase the number of randomly selected persons tested for DNA profiles, in order to facilitate the evaluation by courts of DNA profiling tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We see no need to do so. Work on the evaluation of DNA profiles is already well established both in the forensic science service and elsewhere; I am satisfied that this will enable a full evaluation to be made of the technology.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current budget for staff training, and the performance and evaluations of DNA profiling tests carried out in his Department's and Metropolitan Police forensic science laboratories; if he has any proposals to increase it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The provisions in the current financial year for the development of DNA profiling and the related staff training costs for the forensic science service is £423,500. The corresponding figure for the Metropolitan police Laboratory is £70,500.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to establish facilities capable of carrying out DNA profiling tests at his Department's forensic science laboratories other than the central research establishment at Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is expected that a DNA profiling service will be available in each of the Home Office forensic science laboratories, and also the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory, within the next 12 months.

Prisons

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the therapeutic regime at Grendon Underwood prison.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 26 October at column *18*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on the use of closed conditions for prison visits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Governors are encouraged to allow open visits, at which the inmate and visitors sit together at a table without any barrier between them, wherever possible. Closed visits, at which the inmate and visitors are separated by a barrier, may, however, be imposed in certain circumstances, particularly where it is thought that this is justified in order to prevent the introduction of drugs or other illicit articles into the establishment and special arrangements are made with respect to certain category A prisoners.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women are currently serving sentences in H Wing, Her Majesty's Prison, Durham; how many are serving life sentences; and what are the sentences of the remainder.

Mr. John Patten: According to the records held centrally 37 females were serving sentences in Durham prison on 31 October 1987. 24 were serving life sentences, including custody for life or detention during Her Majesty's Pleasure or for life under section 53, Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Three were serving determinate sentences of over 10 years and 10 were serving sentences of over four years up to 10 years.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the third report of the Home Affairs Committee on the state and use of prisons. Session 1986-87 (HC35-1).

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

Fires (London Underground)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the estimated time it will take the fire brigade to reach from the surface to the middle of the longest stretch of underground line on the Heathrow loop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: These are operational matters which are the responsibility of the London and Surrey fire brigades, who inform me that practical tests have revealed that approximately 20 minutes is needed to reach on foot the furthest part of the loop from the surface.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated length of time the standard fire brigade breathing apparatus lasts before it needs to be refilled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no standard fire brigade breathing apparatus, but most brigades are equipped with sets which have a nominal duration time of 35 and 46 minutes.

Metropolitan Police (Accounting Practice)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cause of the delay in introducing real functional costing to the accounts of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the system to provide information on the costs of certain Metropolitan police functions is being developed in accordance with the agreed programme and will be implemented as planned.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tobacco Industry (Employment)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent employment has declined in the tobacco manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland since 1979.

Mr. Viggers: The number of employees declined by 3,897, from 6,129 at June 1979 to 2,232 at September 1987.

Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to table a draft order similar to the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: A proposal for a draft Matrimonial and Family Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order containing provisions corresponding to those of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 was published in February of this year.

The closing date for comments was the 3 April and I am at present considering the issues raised.

Suckler Cows

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the suckler cow numbers in Northern Ireland for 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Viggers: The numbers of suckler cows on Northern Ireland farms at the June agricultural census, including estimates for those on minor holdings, were:

	Number
1979	245,907
1981	208,537
1983	198,152
1985	204,384
1986	201,505
1987	199,073

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new policy initiatives he will take to halt the decline in suckler cow numbers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Returns from the 1987 June census suggest that the rate of decline in suckler cow numbers in Northern Ireland has been checked. Moreover, prices for store cattle and suckled calves have been considerably higher this year than they were last. For the present therefore I have no plans for new policy initiatives in this area.

Agricultural Development Programme

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the new agricultural development programme will be introduced in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: It is hoped that it will be reintroduced in the spring of 1988.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in due course his social fund allocations for each office in Northern Ireland, with figures for the number of claimants at each office in Northern Ireland, and express the social fund sums for each office as a sum per head for the claimants of each office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The budget for the discretionary part of the Northern Ireland social fund for 1988-89, its first year of operation, will be £21·1 million. Of this, some £7·2

million will be for community care grants, £13·7 million for loans and just under £0·2 million will be held back as a contingency reserve. The allocations to each social security office in Northern Ireland are listed below along with the other information requested.

Social Security Office	*Caseload (July 1987)*	*Allocation For Loans*	*Grants*	*Total*	*Per Capita*
		£	£	£	£
Andersonstown	7,754	905,619	471,353	1,376,972	178
Antrim	5,487	435,034	227,975	663,009	121
Armagh	5,078	322,985	170,219	493,204	97
Ballymena	6,547	379,364	199,742	579,106	88
Ballymoney	4,358	271,671	142,756	414,427	95
Ballynahinch	1,502	41,788	22,590	64,378	43
Banbridge	3,358	159,069	84,721	243,790	73
Bangor	4,848	177,038	94,874	271,912	56
Carrickfergus	3,078	165,336	87,156	252,492	82
Coleraine	6,066	428,571	224,795	653,366	108
Cookstown	3,586	260,206	136,787	396,993	111
Corporation Street	12,596	1,078,670	565,760	1,644,430	131
Downpatrick	2,797	164,193	86,599	250,792	90
Dungannon	6,137	405,542	213,702	619,244	101
Enniskillen	8,490	301,787	161,813	463,600	55
Falls Road	9,390	753,462	392,588	1,146,050	122
Holywood Road	9,286	489,148	258,404	747,552	81
Kilkeel	1,480	58,162	31,118	89,280	60
Knockbreda	6,657	253,421	137,060	390,481	59
Larne	2,965	163,604	85,372	248,976	84
Limavady	3,227	142,863	73,986	216,849	67
Lisburn	6,694	730,380	385,532	1,115,912	167
Londonderry	15,901	1,164,923	606,217	1,771,140	111
Lurgan	6,100	848,299	445,083	1,293, 82	212
Magherafelt	5,289	435,749	229,896	665,645	126
Newcastle	1,941	76,819	40,816	117,635	61
Newry	9,748	697,358	366,163	1,063,521	109
Newtownabbey	5,941	273,545	143,538	417,083	70
Newtownards	3,910	142,875	76,297	219,172	56
Omagh	6,039	395,880	208,563	604,443	100
Portadown	3,992	209,130	111,211	320,341	80
Shaftesbury Square	8,152	584,247	305,219	889,466	109
Shankill	5,328	381,282	201,247	582,529	109
Strabane	6,039	402,120	210,940	613,060	102

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement giving his reasons why the social fund allocations for Northern Ireland were not announced along with those for Great Britain, pursuant to his answer of 17 November, *Official Report*, column 532, to the hon. Member for Belfast, South.

Mr. Needham: The information was not available.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimates are available to him of the potential for expansion in the Northern Ireland shipbuilding industry should there be a general upturn in shipbuilding in the 1990s.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Information about the potential for expansion in Northern Ireland shipbuilding industry is obtained from Harland and Wolff, advising consultants, the Commission of the European Communities, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Lloyd's List and other sources as appropriate. The scope for expansion by Harland and Wolff depends on its ability to secure orders on a commercial basis.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to place his Department's future marine engine building contracts with a company in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* In the event that a marine engine building contract were to be placed tenders would be sought on a commercial basis, under the usual terms and conditions which apply to Government purchasing.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place a copy of Harland and Wolff's corporate plan in the Library; when he expects to receive an update of this or a new corporate plan; and if he will place a copy of this document in the Library.

Mr. Viggers: *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The company submitted its 1987 corporate plan on 16 November. I regret that I cannot place this or the previous plan in the Library as it contains commercially confidential information.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the present composition of the Harland and Wolff board; and what information he has on changes pending.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The directors of Harland and Wolff are: A. Ferry; P. M.

Nielsen; T. J. Parker; C. J. Perrin; A. P. Shearer; J. M. Williams. No changes are imminent, although membership of the board is kept under review.

Agricultural Improvement

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will allocate further funds under the non-plan agricultural improvement scheme to small farmers.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Additional funds have recently been made available under this scheme to all farmers irrespective of business size but subject to expenditure limits per farm business and per labour unit. I have no plans to make further special arrangements for small farmers.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money was allocated under the non-plan agricultural improvement scheme in 1986 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* In 1986-87 financial year £8·46 million was paid to Northern Ireland farmers under this scheme.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications were received under the non-plan agricultural improvement scheme in 1986 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* In 1986-87 financial year 2,273 claims were received from Northern Ireland farmers for grant under this scheme.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications under the non-plan agricultural improvement scheme were refused in 1986; and what were the reasons for refusal, giving the numbers in each refusal category.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* In 1986-87 financial year 28 claims for grant were refused on the grounds that:

(a) they failed to meet the minimum level of expenditure for a claim (£750).

(b) they could not be paid during the currency of an improvement plan undertaken by the applicant.

(c) the work on items on which grant was claimed had not been completed or not completed to required standards; or

(d) a commitment to expenditure for agricultural waste and effluent facilities had been made after the scheme had been closed to such works on 23 July 1985.

To establish the number of refusals in each category would require disproportionate expenditure.

Community Relations

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the remit, staffing, budget and work programme of the community relations unit.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The main roles of the unit are: to examine all major policy initiatives from the point of view of their possible impact on community relations; to review at appropriate intervals the impact on community relations of existing major policies and programmes; to develop new ideas about improving community relations and about how best to support those on the ground who are working to improve community relations.

The unit is staffed by two full-time officers and two senior officers who devote part of their time to directing the work of the unit. The unit has a part-time academic adviser, Professor John Darby, head of the centre for the study of conflict at the University of Ulster. The budget for 1987-88 is £26,000·00.

The unit does not have an operational budget and any policies formulated through the new arrangements and approved by the Secretary of State will be sponsored or carried out by the Department or Departments directly concerned.

Since its formation on 1 October 1987 the unit has been making contact with a very wide range of people and organisations involved or with an interest in community relations issues. It is now examining major policy submissions to Ministers which could have a significant effect on community relations. The unit has also begun work on a short-list of possible policy areas for review and an analysis is being undertaken of the available date on community relations issues and about the need to initiate further research.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress achieved by the community relations unit within his Department.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* The unit became operational only on 1 October 1987 and it would be much too soon to make a progress statement.

The unit has, however, been making contact with a very wide range of people and organisations involved or with an interest in community relations issues. It is beginning to examine major departmental policy submissions which could have a significant effect on community relations.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Drugs

56. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in recent months in stimulating closer international co-operation by customs authorities against drug production and trafficking.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom has an excellent record of international co-operation in the customs field.

Customs and Excise officials attended the United Nations international conference on drug abuse and illicit trafficking held in June in Vienna. This was attended by 138 countries, most of which agreed on a set of recommendations for further action at national, regional and international level which will be presented to the United Nations commission on narcotic drugs next February. Similarly, the United Kingdom has been an active participant in the intergovernmental group set up by the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations to consider a new draft convention on drug trafficking and related matters which will enhance co-operation between customs authorities in many areas.

A significant boost to international co-operation was given by the Drug Trafficking Offences Act, which came into force this year. Customs and Excise is in close consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is negotiating bilateral agreements with a number of countries on the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets.

United Kingdom Customs have in recent months assisted in the training of officials from Peru and

Bangladesh, and have arranged for drug testing equipment to be made available to Nigeria, Ghana and Bangladesh. In addition, a United Kingdom Customs officer will shortly be going out as training officer to the Caribbean.

Customs and Excise have a total of nine drug liaison officers in post in countries known to be sources or points of transit for drugs. This improves intelligence gathering and assists these countries in their own fight against drugs. It is hoped that two more officers will be in post by next year.

The United Kingdom has continued to support the initiatives of the Customs Co-operation Council in such areas as enforcement training, co-operation with trade and industry and better collation, analysis and dissemination of drugs intelligence. Through the International Maritime Organisation and the International Chamber of Shipping, United Kingdom customs are co-operating with other customs authorities in encouraging these international organisations to recognise and develop the role they can play in the struggle against drug trafficking and abuse.

The commitment of Customs and Excise to international co-operation is exemplified by the recent successful operation in which 208 kg of cocaine, with a street value of £51 million, was seized at Southampton and followed by the arrest of eight people in Holland as a result of close collaboration with the French, German and Dutch authorities.

Eurotunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 23 November and the details of the particular facts of the free journeys concession now published in the enrolment prospectus, how he expects to apply the rules on the tax treatment of benefits to shareholders in relation to the Eurotunnel scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The facts in the prospectus are not, by themselves, sufficient to establish the tax treatment of the benefits to shareholders. The tax treatment will depend upon all the relevant facts. As I explained, the rules will apply to Eurotunnel in the same way as they apply to other schemes.

Beer, Wines and Spirits

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* the tax take, from an increase of 10 per cent. in the duty payable on beer, wines and spirits.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated effects in a full year at 1988-89 prices are as follows:

Increasing the duty payable by 10 per cent.	*(a) Estimated impact effect on the retail price index* Per cent.	*(b) Estimated net revenue yield (£ million)*
Beer	0·1	170
Wine	0·1	50
Spirits	0·1	65

Note: The RPI effect is shown to the nearest 0·1 per cent.

Housing Bill

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of reprinting the Housing Bill; what happened to the incorrectly printed copies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The total cost of reprinting House of Commons Bill No. 54—the Housing Bill—was £4,837. Around 2,100 unissued copies of the original print were destroyed by HMSO.

Educational Reform Bill (Corrections)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of issuing the corrections slip (50/1) to the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of printing the corrections slip to House of Commons Bill No. 53—the Education Reform Bill—was £124. Distribution costs cannot be determined exactly without incurring disproportionate cost, but are estimated to have been around £200.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the European Court of Justice to announce its decision in the case taken by the European Economic Community Commission on 15 September against the United Kingdom regarding the levies of value added tax on new households, gas, electricity, water, sewerage and other services.

Mr. Lilley: Pursuant to my reply of 9 November 1987 at column *64*, the Advocate General has now delivered his opinion on the zero-rates infraction case in the European Court of Justice. The opinion is only advisory and does not form part of the court's judgment.

The court will base its final judgment on the full pleadings, both written and oral, of the two parties. This is expected to be delivered early in the new year. We shall need to see and study in detail the precise term of the court's judgment which is of course binding on the United Kingdom before any implications for policy become clear.

The Government have vigorously contended that the zero rates disputed by the Commission are consistent with European Community law.

The case is entirely separate from the Commission's new proposals on indirect tax approximation presented to the ECOFIN Council which Lord Cockfield made public recently and which cannot be adopted without unanimous agreement by the Council of Ministers. In this context, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made clear, both in the House and elsewhere, that the Government will not permit to come into force any proposals that in any way conflict with the pledges we have given concerning the United Kingdom's zero rates of VAT.

TRANSPORT

Train Accidents

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for British Rail for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number of accidents involving trains, *(b)* the number of fatal accidents involving trains and (c) the number of fatalities due to train accidents.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is given, for each of the years 1979 to 1986, in the Department's published annual reports on the safety record of the railways in Great Britain, copies of which are in the Library. The information for 1987 is not yet complete but will be published in due course.

M11 and M6 (Repair Work)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ensure that those stretches of the M11 and M6 currently subject to contraflows and the coning-off of lanes for repair work will be restored to full use over the Christmas and new year holiday period, where it is safe to do so.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During bank holidays it is our practice to lift current closure and contraflow arrangements wherever it is safe to do so and the nature of the operations permit. There is always the possibility that an emergency may make it necessary to impose new restrictions. Subject to this possibility, it is hoped over the Christmas and new year holidays to keep the M6 clear and also the M11 with the exception of an area affected by bridge construction at Stansted rail works.

Cowes Harbour (Fatal Accident)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold an inquiry into the fatal incident involving a hydrofoil in Cowes harbour on Friday 27 November, with the results to be publicly available as soon as possible after the end of the inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have appointed a marine surveyor in my Department to undertake a preliminary inquiry into the collision between the hydrofoil ferry Sheerwater 3 and the cabin cruiser Kingfisher on 27 November.

The collision occurred at 1720 hours in West Cowes harbour. The Kingfisher was extensively damaged and the three occupants were thrown into the water. I much regret that one of them lost his life and another suffered very serious injuries. A 14-year-old boy was rescued unhurt. There were no injuries to passengers on board the hydrofoil and it did not suffer any damage.

Details of the findings of the inquiry will be made available to interested parties as soon as possible.

Marine Radio Station Facilities

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will be taking to seek alternative quotations for the provision of marine radio station facilities from alternative radio and telephony operators.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am seeking advice to who may lawfully offer such facilities and I shall write to my hon. Friend.

London Underground (Drivers)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many drivers on the Underground have been disciplined or threatened with disciplinary action for refusing to take out trains on which the driver's radio was not working; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Disciplinary action is entirely a matter for the management of London Underground. Trains are not allowed to be taken out on the deep tube system unless they have a working radio; and I am informed that no drivers have been disciplined for refusing to take out trains on which the driver's radio was inoperative.

London Underground (Victoria Line)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the safety measures for one-person operation of the Victoria line have been omitted from the conversion of other lines to one person operation with the agreement of the railways inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The Victoria line was constructed before detailed criteria for one-person operation had been developed by London Transport or British Railways. The only significant difference, which is not strictly a safety measure, lies in the fact that Victoria line trains are automatically driven.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish fully the recent departmental review of the railway inspectorate.

Mr. David Mitchell: We are consulting widely on the Department's review of the railway inspectorate, and I am placing a copy in the Library of the House.

Coaches

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if in the light of the further coach accident on the M25 he will now ban coaches from the outside lane of three-lane motorways;

(2) if in the light of the further coach accident on the M25 he will now restrict coach speed limits to 50 mph on all roads at all times.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Preliminary investigation of the coach accident on the M25 suggests that the coach was travelling at approximately 45 mph in the second lane when the driver is believed to have collapsed at the wheel.

Coaches are limited to 70 mph on motorways, 60 mph on dual carriageways and 50 mph on single carriageways. New regulations requiring the fitting of speed limiters will be made shortly. There are no plans to change the coach speed limits or ban them from the third lane.

Winsford Bypass

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to commence on the A54 Station Road, Winsford bypass; what will be the cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is a Cheshire county council scheme which we are supporting through transport supplementary grant. The estimated cost shown in the council's transport policies and programme submissions is about £3 million. I understand that construction started in July.

Gibraltar Airport

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his discussions *(a)* with his Spanish counterpart, on the use of Gibraltar airport and *(b)* on the completion of an agreement on European Economic Community air fares.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I yesterday reached agreement in discussion with the Spanish Foreign and Transport Ministers on arrangements relating to civil aviation at Gibraltar airport. These practical and co-operative arrangements, which are set out in a joint declaration published today, are intended to improve substantially the handling of passengers and freight at the airport and to open up possibilities for its future development. Copies of the declaration are in the Library of the House.

This agreement removes the obstacle which last June blocked adoption of the European Community's aviation liberalisation package. The package, which includes important measures to encourage new, lower air fares, was approved in principle by all member states in June and we now hope to see it adopted at the meeting of the Council of Transport Ministers next Monday.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the information on marginal tax rates given in his reply of 21 October to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), *Official Report*, column 809, taking account of the benefit and withdrawal rates and national insurance contributions announced for April 1988 but assuming current tax rates.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 19 November at columns *647-8*.

DHSS Local Offices

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total amounts paid out in each of the last three financial years in single payments by the following offices of his Department: Bloomsbury (Tavistock Square), Hoxton (Drysdale Street), and Finsbury Park (Archway Tower).

Mr. Portillo: The information asked for is given in the table.

	1984-85	*1985-86*	[1] *1986-87*
	£	£	£
Bloomsbury	246,922	494,075	925,256
Hoxton	468,993	784,999	842,033
Finsbury Park	665,833	924,165	998,387

[1] The information for 1986-87 is provisional and subject to amendment.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of claimants whose housing benefit is delayed within his Department's local offices.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's local offices do not administer housing beneit, but certify to local authorities that a housing benefit claimant is in receipt of supplementary benefit.

No record is kept of the time taken to send certificates to the local authorities.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute an inquiry into the series of decisions made by his Department's local offices in the Bristol area which led to Ms. Rachel Caine's housing benefit being suspended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The handling of Rachel Caine's claim for benefit is currently being investigated. I will write to the hon. Member when all the facts of the case are known.

Welfare Milk

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates would be the annual cost of continuing to provide welfare milk free to pregnant and breast-feeding women and children under five years of age from low income families, families on supplementary benefit, or family income supplement and handicapped school age children.

Mrs. Currie: We estimate that the annual cost of continuing to supply welfare milk to all the groups mentioned would be some £81 million for liquid milk and £15·5 million for dried baby milk.

West Midlands RHA (Capital Allocation)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis the decision was made to allocate £250,000 of the West Midlands' regional health authority's waiting list fund to BUPA; and if he will give instructions that money allocated to regional health authorities for the reduction in waiting lists should be spent only within the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The additional £240,000 from the national waiting list fund has been allocated to the West Midlands regional health authority, not to BUPA. The BUPA role is to use its expertise in negotiating with private hospitals to advise the health authority on the private sector options available. We expect health authorities to take account of all sources of health care when looking for ways of improving waiting times for National Health Service patients.

Halifax (Cold Weather Payment)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households in Halifax received the extra payment for exceptionally cold weather during the winter of 1986-87.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information on the number of £5 weekly payments made, the total amount paid and number of claims refused for each local office in Great Britain has been placed in the Library. The great majority of successful claimants will have received £5 in respect of each of the weeks for which help was available.

High Rent Schemes

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the authorities which have *(a)*

requested, and (*b*) received authorisations to operate a high rent area scheme: (i) for public authority and private tenants, (ii) for public authority tenants alone, (iii) for private tenants alone and (iv) for class authorisations; and if he will identify, in respect of class authorisations, the particular type of dwelling for which each authorisation was granted.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested for the period 1 December 1986 to 30 November 1987 is shown in the table and list. The class authorisations were granted for dwellings providing sheltered accommodation and, in the case of Coventry, also for accommodation for disabled people.

General Applications for High Rent Scheme 1986-87

Local Authority	*Application*		*Authorisation*	
	Public	*Private*	*Public*	*Private*
London Borough of Barnet	●	●	●	
London Borough of Camden		●		●
London Borough of Ealing	●	●		
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	●	●	●	
London Borough of Harrow	●		●	
London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	●	●	●	●
London Borough of Kingston upon Thames	●		●	
London Borough of Merton	●		●	
London Borough of Redbridge	●		●	
London Borough of Sutton	●		●	
London Borough of Wandsworth	●		●	
London Borough of Westminster	●	●	●	●
Blaenau Gwent	●		●	
Brighton	●		●	
Eastbourne	●		●	
Epsom and Ewell	●		●	
Middlesbrough	●		●	
Ogwr	●		●	
Southend on Sea	●		●	
Telford	●		●	
Test Valley	●		●	
Wealden	●		●	
Wirral	●		●	

● High rent schemes.

Local Authorities granted class authorisations

London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
London Borough of Richmond on Thames
London Borough of Southwark
London Borough of Wandsworth
Argyll and Bute
Ashford
Badenoch and Strathspey
Bath
Berwickshire
Bolsover
Bradford
Bristol
Broxtowe
Chesterfield
Coventry
Cumnock and Doon Valley
Easington
East Devon
East Lothian
Edinburgh
Elmbridge
Ettrick and Lauderdale
Falkirk
Gedling
Gordon
Inverclyde
Kerrier
Kirkcaldy
Leicester
Liverpool
Lochaber
Manchester
Merthyr Tydfil
Middlesbrough
Midlothian
Milton Keynes
Moray
Nottingham
Portsmouth
Roxburgh
Southampton
South Holland
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stewarty
Stockton-on-Tees
Wakefield
Wear Valley
West Lothian
Western Isles
Wokingham
Wrekin

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of staff employed by local authorities to administer the housing benefit scheme.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities' latest available estimates indicate that about 10,700 staff are employed to administer the housing benefit scheme.

Invalid Care Allowance

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of applications for invalid care allowance received by the Department of Health and Social Security, for each of the years 1979 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table:

Year	*Total number of claims received*
1979	6,489
1980	6,364
1981	6,572
1982	6,866
1983	6,619
1984	6,958
1985	16,315
1986	110,429

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will supply the number of Department of Health and Social Services employees dealing with invalid care allowance applications for each of the years 1979 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of staff dealing with invalid care allowance claims were as follows:

[1] *Year*	*Staff*
1979	32
1980	32
1981	34
1982	34
1983	31
1984	31

[1] Year	Staff
1985	34
1986	34
1987	397

[1] All figures are at 1 January.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Apple Juice

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the level of consumption of apple juice within the United Kingdom for each of the last five years; and if he will indicate what proportion of this consumption is accounted for by United Kingdom domestic production of apple juice.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No precise information is available, but there is evidence that the United Kingdom market for apple juice has been expanding in recent years and may now amount to some £35 to 40 million. Domestic production probably accounts for no more than one fifth of this consumption and this represents, therefore, an important opportunity for United Kingdom growers.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will supply figures for the level of exports of apple juice from the United Kindom to *(a)* EEC and *(b)* non-EEC countries, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Value of Exports of Apple Juice[1]

£ thousand

	[2]EC Countries	Non-EC Countries	Total
1982	295	317	612
1983	208	297	505
1984	299	279	578
1985	269	168	437
1986	564	137	701

[1] Include some pear juice exports.
[2] The figures for EC countries reflect the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community in 1986.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not use recycled paper for general stationery purposes for reasons of financial economy since it is significantly more expensive than paper of comparable quality made from new material. However, some other paper products supplied by Her Majesty's Stationery Office — for example, manilla, toilet tissue and sacks — contain varying but significant elements of recycled waste.

The Department's waste paper is usually collected and pulped by contractors, restricted or sensitive material being shredded under HMSO supervision. I understand that both these grades of waste go for recycling.

Storm Damage

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to deal with tree damage resulting from the October hurricane.

Mr. MacGregor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 30 November, at column 441, to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) which deals with the action we are taking in relation to shelter belts and orchard trees.

In addition, grants are available under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme and broadleaved woodland grant scheme for the replacement of blown trees. Woodland owners can obtain information and advice on these schemes from the Commission's local offices.

The Forestry Commission has set up a forest windblown action committee which, within a few days of the storm, established a task force based at the Commission's research station near Farnham in Surrey. This task force has already provided help and advice to woodland owners and the public generally in response to hundreds of enquiries. Following completion of an assessment of the damage to woodlands in the affected areas, the action committee is now preparing guidance on the orderly marketing of blown trees, and woodland owners will be kept fully informed.

Wheat Exports

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the principal countries to which wheat grown in the United Kingdom has been exported since 1 August.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Total United Kingdom wheat exports between 1 August and 20 November were provisionally 550,713 tonnes. The principal destinations and quantities exported to them are set out below:

	Tonnes
Italy	169,300
Spain	104,589
West Germany	89,105
Poland	43,767
Soviet Union	37,864

Irradiation of Food

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce whether the Government intend to legalise irradiation as a method of food preservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's consideration of the report of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods and of the committee's further advice following representations on the original report is almost complete. An announcement will be make shortly.

Alcoholic Drinks (Packaging)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he plans to introduce legislation for strength labelling for pre-packaged alcoholic drinks.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall shortly be circulating draft regulations on the compulsory strength marking of alcoholic drinks to interested parties for comment. The legislation is due to be implemented by 1 May 1988.

Hedgerows

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) of 19 November, *Official Report*, column 1195, what is the value of grants given recently over any convenient period of time to people to look after their hedgerows.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* All environmentally sensitive area management agreements require scheme participants to maintain hedges and walls. It is not, however, possible to isolate payments for this particular item from that for all the other management prescriptions in the agreement which together qualify for the ESA payment.

In addition, grants of 60 per cent. and 30 per cent. for hedge planting and laying are available to farmers under the agriculture improvement scheme and other capital grant schemes. £889,000 was spent on these grants in England and Wales in 1986.

Intervention Costs

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the United Kingdom accepted responsibility for a share of the cost of storing food in intervention; what the current percentage is; and what has been the cost borne by the United Kingdom for such storage over the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The Council agreed in April 1986 that, as an economy measure, payments to member states on account of their intervention operations would be reduced by one-quarter with effect from 1 December 1985. However, these payments are calculated on weighted average costs, not differentiated by member state, and therefore do not necessarily match actual costs.

The costs of intervention storage in the United Kingdom in 1986-87 and related receipts from the Community were:

£ million

	Actual storage costs	*Community reimbursement*	*Percentage*
Cereals	79·4	35·8	45
Butter	22·6	14·9	66
Skimmed milk powder	0·8	0·6	75
Beef	25·8	10·6	41
Total	128·6	61·9	48

The United Kingdom's share of the Community's stocks is lower than our share of contributions to the Community's budget. Therefore an increase in storage rates would not be in our interests since it would inflate our payments to the Community by more than our receipts from it.

Sewage Dumping

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply of 17 November, *Official Report*, column 527, if he will list the known sources of sewage dumping in the Bristol channel at a point some 11 miles north of Ilfracombe; and if he will list the times and places where scientific surveillance has been carried out by his Department.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Sewage sludge dumping in the Bristol channel at a point some 11 miles north of Ilfracombe is carried out by the Wessex water authority and the Welsh water authority. The site has been in use for many years and was approved by the Ministry under internationally agreed rules.

Scientific surveillance of the site was carried out by the Ministry in the following years since statutory controls were introduced in 1974: 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1983, 1987.

The surveys extended up to 10 miles from the centre of the site. In addition, regular checks are made of the composition of the sludge dumped at sea—which is in liquid form — and of the operation of the dumping vessels, including inspection of the log books.

DEFENCE

Hepatitis B

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to protect medical and para medical staff of the armed forces against contracting the Hepatitis B virus.

Mr. Freeman: Hepatitis B vaccination is already offered on request to health care workers who come into regular contact with blood and/or body fluids of their patients, in line with the current guidelines already issued by the DHSS.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will introduce a policy of Hepatitis B vaccination for members of the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The MOD already has a policy for Hepatitis B vaccination for groups of members of the armed forces who are considered to be specifically at risk. These include personnel posted to high risk areas of the world where there is no regular Service medical support.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether further deployment of cruise missiles upon Salisbury plain will take place after the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Our present expectation is that, following the signing of an INF agreement, off-base training exercises will continue until the missiles are withdrawn from their United Kingdom bases, but cruise missiles have never been deployed during such exercises.

F-15 Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States air force plans to deploy F-15 aircraft at RAF Bentwaters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United States Government have made no formal request to deploy United States Air Force F-15 aircraft at RAF Bentwaters.

F-18 Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has any plans to purchase the F-18 aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

British Telecom Research Laboratory

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purposes his Department pays British Telecom Research Laboratory for the use of its Brightwell research centre.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department pays British Telecom for the use of its research laboratory at Martlesham heath, near Brightwell, for work in connection with the Alvey advanced information technology project.

Anti-Gas Suits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests are carried out on anti-gas suits.

Mr. Sainsbury: The protective features of chemical defence clothing are subjected to rigorous laboratory tests. Other aspects—for example, wear and tear, comfort—are tested in the same way as for other clothing.

Risk Reduction Centres

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ensure that the United Kingdom is fully involved in the risk reduction centres which it is proposed to establish in the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Nuclear risk reduction centres are being established in the United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under a bilateral United States-Union of Soviet Socialist Republics agreement to which the United Kingdom is not a party. Their principal function is to exchange information and notifications as required under certain existing and possible future arms control and confidence-building agreements to which the United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are party. We welcome the part they will play in further lessening the chances of conflict between the two signatories.

Export Orders

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is available from his Department to help small firms to secure defence export orders.

Mr. Sainsbury: Through the Defence Export Services Organisation, the Ministry of Defence is able to provide advice to all United Kingdom companies—whether they be large or small—on defence market prospects on a world-wide, regional or country basis.

Further follow-up support and assistance to companies seeking to export their products and services may be provided in conjunction with our defence representatives overseas.

US Military Personnel

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list, for each year since 1979, the total numbers of United States military personnel at the military installations at *(a)* Thurso, *(b)* Mormond Hill, *(c)* Edzell, *(d)* Prestwick, *(e)* Machrihanish, *(f)* Holy Loch and *(g)* Glen Douglas;

(2) what was the total number of United States military personnel stationed in Scotland in each year since 1979;

(3) if he will list, for each year since 1979, the total numbers of United States civilian personnel at the military installations at: *(a)* Thurso, *(b)* Mormond Hill, *(c)* Edzell, *(d)* Prestwick, *(e)* Machrihanish, *(f)* Holy Loch and *(g)* Glen Douglas;

(4) if he will list, for each year since 1979, the total numbers of dependants of United States civilian and military personnel at the military installations at *(a)* Thurso, *(b)* Mormond Hill, *(c)* Edzell, *(d)* Prestwick, *(e)* Machrihanish, *(f)* Holy Loch and *(g)* Glen Douglas, who are resident in the area.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The numbers of United States service and civilian personnel assigned to and the numbers of dependants located at installations in Scotland and the total numbers of each category in Scotland, collated from information provided by various United States sources to the Ministry of Defence, in each year since 1979, are as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
United States military personnel									
Thurso	137	137	139	139	135	156	175	188	200
Mormond Hill	11	11	11	10	11	11	11	12	12
Edzell	567	541	551	684	630	731	759	732	648
Prestwick	10	9	9	1	2	8	2	17	7
Machrihanish	27	27	27	87	80	95	91	74	118
Holy Loch	1,695	1,655	1,672	1,704	1,800	1,821	1,881	1,351	1,846
Glen Douglas	2	2	2	18	18	18	18	18	18
Others	10	4	4	12	7	10	5	5	5
Total	2,459	2,386	2,415	2,655	2,683	2,850	2,942	2,397	2,854
United States civilian personnel									
Thurso	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Mormond Hill	8	8	8	8	6	7	7	7	7
Edzell	15	11	39	30	44	13	78	119	79
Prestwick	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Machrihanish	—	—	3	—	3	—	—	5	8

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Holy Loch	2	6	70	28	33	17	47	42	42
Glen Douglas	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	25	25	121	67	87	38	133	175	138
United States dependants									
Thurso	138	183	174	158	130	148	154	152	197
Mormond Hill	25	25	24	22	21	24	25	26	26
Edzell	726	599	660	655	622	723	695	684	604
Prestwick	—	—	—	—	7	23	6	8	8
Machrihanish	46	37	73	43	110	103	103	97	119
Holy Loch	1,248	1,499	1,408	1,597	1,848	1,368	1,651	1,617	1,371
Glen Douglas	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	17	—
Others	—	—	—	—	8	14	10	10	9
Total	2,183	2,343	2,339	2,475	2,746	2,403	2,661	2,611	2,334

Note: The lines marked "others" represent the small numbers of United States servicemen and their dependants attached to or on exchange at United Kingdom bases in Scotland or studying in Scotland.

RN Submarines (Nuclear Reactors)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the location of the sites selected for disposal of the reactor components of dismantled Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decisions have yet been taken on the preferred disposal route for reactors from decommissioned nuclear submarines.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on his proposals for the disposal of 300 tonne reactor compartments from aging nuclear submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decisions have yet been taken on the preferred disposal route for reactors from decommissioned nuclear submarines.

Army Training Area (Scotland)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in identifying potential locations for a new 50,000 acre Army training area in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: There is a significant shortfall of land for Army training within the United Kingdom. Our policy is to consider any suitable areas of land that may become available, in Scotland or elsewhere, particularly land near existing training areas. We expect to complete this year the purchase of some 3,600 acres to extend the existing training area at Garelochhead but no other specific areas in Scotland are under active consideration at present.

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information he had on radioactivity levels in the exercise Purple Warrior area, prior to the exercise;

(2) whether he received any requests to postpone exercise Purple Warrior on the grounds of radioactivity levels in the exercise area; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether his Department received any communications prior to exercise Purple Warrior regarding levels of radioactivity in the area of the exercise; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many explosions were caused during exercise Purple Warrior which occasioned significant earth movements.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On no occasion during the planning or course of exercise Purple Warrior were there any indications that the land used for exercise activity posed health risks to exercise participants due to danger from radioactivity levels in the exercise area. No such information was given to my Department prior to the exercise and no requests have been received from any source advising the postponement or cancellation of the exercise on these grounds. One letter from a member of the public has been received on the subject of levels of radioactivity in the exercise area. No explosions occasioning significant earth movement took place during the exercise.

Military Exercises (Shetland)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any military exercises by British or NATO forces are planned for Shetland in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general practice to provide details of future NATO or national exercise programmes, although notice is given of significant individual exercises at the appropriate time.

HMS Illustrious (Refit)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his reply of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *459*, what will be the employment implications for Devonport dockyard of his decision to delay the refit of HMS Illustrious until 1991.

Mr. Sainsbury: All matters concerning employment at Devonport dockyard are primarily for the commercial managers.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what margin of error is attached to his Department's estimate of size of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's chemical weapon stockpile.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 9 November, at column *36*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether any North Altantic Treaty Organisation country is prepared to display publicly its chemical weapon munitions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The full range of current US Army CW munitions, including a mock-up of the 155mm binary projectile, was displayed in the course of a visit in November this year by a Soviet delegation to the US CW destruction facility at Tooele, Utah. Observers from a number of countries, including representatives of conference on disarmament members, also visited Tooele in 1983.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide his latest estimate of the United States' chemical weapons capability.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* It would be inappropriate for me to comment in detail on the defence capabilities of an ally. As is well known, however, through publications such as the US Secretary of Defence's annual report to Congress, the US has a limited and aging retaliatory CW capability which they plan to modernise.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has added to its stockpile of chemical weapons since the size of its arsenal was first estimated as being 300,000 agent tonnes; and when this figure was first estimated by him.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* Our assessment that the Soviet Union's stockpile of chemical weapons included some 300,000 tonnes of nerve agent alone was first made in the early 1970s. We now assess this to be a minimum figure.

Nerve Gas

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has of the extent to which the battlefield missile warheads designed for thickened VX nerve gas displayed at Shickany by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were obsolete technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 27 October 1987, at column 211. The weapons and equipment on display during the visit to Shikhany in October this year, including the warheads to which the hon. Member refers, generally dated from the 1950s, but we have no reason to believe that they are not still in service with Soviet forces.

Microbiology

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the reply, *Official Report*, 13 November, column 335, what is his Department's assessment of the potential military implications of the Soviet Union's microbiological research capability, including the likely level of self-damage which would result from its use.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The Soviet Union's significant microbiological research programme is capable of exploitation as a source of biological warfare agents. It is unlikely that weapons of this kind would be developed without every precaution being taken to prevent or minimise self-damage in the event of their use.

Early Warning Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply, 13 November, *Official Report*, column 336, whether RAF Fylingdales is the only ballistic missile early warning system able to detect a ballistic missile attack targeted at the United Kingdom within the time required for the issuing of a national alert; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* I have nothing to add to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 24 March 1987, at column 136.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mineral Water and Milk

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will give the prices of (i) each type and brand of mineral water on sale in the House *(a)* in 200 ml. bottles and *(b)* in one litre bottles; and (ii) milk in standard sizes of carton or bottle.

Mr. Wakeham: The price and capacity of each of the items are clearly displayed in accordance with recognised practices laid down by the Trading Standards Department.

Procedure Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, what consultations he will be holding before announcing his conclusions on ways of bringing recent Procedure Committee reports before the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Wakeham: I shall be consulting in the normal way through the usual channels, and, as required, with hon. Members particularly concerned. I have already informed the House, during Business Questions on 26 November 1987, at column 382-83, that I have been in consultation with the previous Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to let me know his views I shall be pleased to consider them.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, which hon. Members, in addition to the usual channels, have been and will be consulted on the proposals to establish a Select Committee on Procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: A motion for the establishment of any Select Committee provides an opportunity for the House generally to express its view. In this instance, and in addition to consultations through the usual channels, I propose to consult, as necessary, with hon. Members having a particular concern in this matter.

Select Committee Reports

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, how he gauges the general wish of the House when deciding whether to propose that a Select Committee report should be debated on a substantive motion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: In accordance with the normal processes of consultation which precede the announcement of the forthcoming business of the House.

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission proposes to make any alterations in respect of its policy towards those aspects of financial control of Select Committee operations for which it has responsibility, as a result of the experience of eight years of Select Committees.

Mr. Beith: No. The Commission is, of course, prepared to consider any proposal for change which may be made by the Liaison Committee when it is appointed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 357, how much has now been paid out in salaries and contributions to pensions etc., since June, for parliamentary Select Committee staff; what was the figure for the comparable period between June 1983 and the date of the eventual establishment of the Committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: In 1983 the majority of departmental Select Committees were appointed on 9 December, and the remainder five days later. Most of the departmental Select Committees were appointed this Session on 2 December. For the purpose of this reply the dates shown above have been used for calculation. In both Sessions a number of non-departmental Select Committees were appointed earlier than these dates. The total cost of salaries at the mean of the salary scale from 1 June to 9 December 1983 of staff employed wholly or mainly in connection with the work of Select Committees, including London weighting, but excluding allowances, provision for superannuation and employers' national insurance contributions was £523,709. The equivalent total cost for 1987 was £647,995. Pensions and employers' national insurance contributions would add approximately 30 per cent. to these figures.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 4 December 1987

WALES

Council House Sales

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by each Welsh local authority (*a*) the number of applications received from tenants to buy their council property under the provisions of the Housing Act 1980 and (*b*) the percentage of the total numbers of properties that these applications represent.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of Local Authority Dwellings Sold[1]

Welsh Districts	*Applications received*	*Percentage of total Housing Stock*[2]	*Percentage of LA stock at April 1981*[3]
Aberconwy	1,681	7·3	40·5
Alyn and Deeside	1,387	5·1	23·3
Arfon	1,444	6·4	24·2
Blaenau Gwent	2,322	7·4	19·9
Brecknock	1,684	10·2	43·5
Cardiff	8,529	8·0	33·8
Carmarthen[4]	167	0·8	4·1
Ceredigion	1,452	5·5	35·3
Colwyn[4]	2	—	0·1
Cynon Valley	1,772	6·6	27·2
Delyn	1,400	5·7	23·7
Dinefwr	910	5·9	29·3
Dwyfor	402	3·0	23·5
Glyndwr	1,431	8·4	36·0
Islwyn	4,025	16·1	44·4
Llanelli	3,582	11·8	37·7
Lliw Valley	2,094	8·6	33·7
Meirionnydd	898	5·4	32·9
Merthyr Tydfil	2,423	10·3	28·1
Monmouth	1,911	6·8	31·7
Montgomeryshire/ Newtown[5]	2,010	9·5	38·3
Neath	2,261	8·7	29·9
Newport	4,189	8·1	26·7
Ogwr	4,853	9·8	37·1
Port Talbot/Afan	3,558	17·5	39·5
Preseli	3,081	7·4	28·4
Radnor	630	6·7	40·7
Rhondda	776	2·4	14·3
Rhuddlan	990	4·4	30·9
Rhymney Valley	4,137	10·7	32·1
South Pembrokeshire	816	4·8	22·4
Swansea	3,578	4·9	17·9
Taff-Ely	3,842	10·9	38·2
Torfaen/ Cwmbran[5]	7,702	21·7	40·5
Vale of Glamorgan	2,622	6·3	31·2
Wrexham Maelor	3,544	8·0	19·6
Ynys Mon	1,315	4·5	19·7
WALES TOTAL	88,430	7·9	29·6

[1] Number of Right to Buy applications received up to June 1987.
[2] Stock at 1 April 1986.
[3] Local Authority stock at 1 April 1981.
[4] Colwyn and Carmarthen rates are generally made under voluntary terms.
[5] Newtown and Cwmbran are new towns.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by each Welsh local authority (*a*) the number of housing properties sold to tenants under the provisions of the Housing Act 1980 and (*b*) the percentage of the total housing stock that these sales represent.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of local authority dwellings sold[1]

Welsh Districts	*Numbers of dwellings*	*Percentage of total*[2] *housing stock*	*Percentage of local authority stock*[3]
Aberconwy	1,119	4·9	27·0
Alyn and Deeside	766	2·8	12·9
Arfon	893	4·0	14·9
Blaenau Gwent	1,203	3·9	10·3
Brecknock	979	5·9	25·1
Cardiff	4,843	4·5	19·2
Carmarthen[4]	71	0·3	1·7
Ceredigion	848	3·2	20·6
Colwyn[4]	—	—	—
Cynon Valley	953	3·6	14·6
Delyn	775	3·1	13·1
Dinefwr	514	3·3	16·6
Dwyfor	267	2·0	15·6
Glyndwr	834	4·9	21·0
Islwyn	2,691	10·8	29·7
Llanelli	2,318	7·6	24·4
Lliw Valley	1,206	4·9	19·4
Meirionnydd	623	3·8	22·8
Merthyr Tydfil	1,326	5·6	15·4
Monmouth	1,145	4·1	19·0
Montgomeryshire/Newtown[5]	1,096	5·2	20·9
Neath	1,512	5·8	20·0
Newport	2,603	5·0	16·6
Ogwr	2,965	6·0	22·7
Port Talbot/Afan	2,205	10·8	24·5
Preseli	1,365	4·9	18·6
Radnor	409	4·3	26·4
Rhondda	403	1·3	7·4
Rhuddlan	540	2·4	16·9
Rhymney Valley	2,511	6·5	19·5
South Pembrokeshire	460	2·7	12·7
Swansea	1,727	2·4	8·6
Taff-Ely	2,253	6·4	22·4
Torfaen/Cwmbran[5]	4,905	13·8	25·8
Vale of Glamorgan	1,543	3·7	18·4
Wrexham Maelor	1,691	3·8	9·4
Ynys Môn	877	3·0	13·2
WALES TOTAL	52,439	4·7	17·6

[1] Number of Right to Buy dwellings sold up to June 1987.
[2] Stock at 1 April 1986.
[3] Local authority stock at 1 April 1981.
[4] Colwyn and Carmarthen rates are generally made under voluntary terms.
[5] Newton and Cwmbran are new towns.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what change in real terms will take place in Welsh programmes for (i) housing, (ii) education, (iii) personal social services, (iv) roads and transport, and (v) all other services, as a result of his announcement in a written answer of 30 November to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) of his plans for local authority capital expenditure for 1988-89; and what are the equivalent percentage changes.

Mr. Peter Walker: Details of changes in gross provision in real terms between 1987-88 and 1988-89 for housing; education; personal social services; roads and transport and all other services are:

Gross provision at 1987-88[1] prices

(£ million)

Services	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*Percentage change*
Housing	181·9	187·2	2·9
Education	43·0	45·7	6·3
Personal social services	7·2	7·2	—
Roads and transport	70·2	61·3	−12·7
All other services	107·8	98·9	−8·3
Total	410·1	400·3	−2·4

[1] Measured by use of the GDP deflator at market prices applicable at 24 September 1987.

Health and Personal Social Services

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached a decision about the allocation of resources for health and personal social services in Wales for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: Subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to allocate £1,173 million in 1988-89 to health and personal social services in Wales. This represents a cash increase of £73·9 million over provision in 1987-88.

It will provide £843·9 million for the hospital and community health services, an increase of £46 million over provision in 1987-88. I will announce allocations to individual health authorities as soon as possible. In addition to their allocations, health authorities will retain the benefit of cash released through cost-improvement programmes, income from charges for treatment of private patients, and receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings.

Within these totals, investment of over £19 million will be devoted to special initiatives to promote the development of modern patterns of services for those with mental handicaps, elderly people and those suffering from mental illness. I expect this to be further enhanced by investment from the discretionary resources of health and social services authorities and by the reinvestment of resources released by improvements in efficiency in the running of existing services.

The funds I have announced will maintain a substantial contribution towards the costs in Wales of measures against AIDS. I am also making available from within these totals significant additional resources for the Welsh Health Promotion Authority.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the subjects discussed at the meeting in Johannesburg on 28 November between the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), and Mr. Kobus Meiring, the South African Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: I took advantage of a transit stop in Johannesburg for a short talk with the South African Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Kobus Meiring. The conversation was mainly about Mozambique. I impressed on Mr. Meiring Her Majesty's Government's support for normalising relations between South Africa and Mozambique and desire to develop economic co-operation. I also made it clear that we wanted to see any problems between South Africa and other countries in the region solved by peaceful means.

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting between his colleague, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and the United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah in Abu Dhabi on 24 November, with particular regard to developments in the Gulf region.

Mr. Mellor: I welcomed the opportunity to meet Mr. Abdullah during my first visit to the United Arab Emirates. We had a useful discussion on bilateral matters and exchanged views on the Iran-Iraq conflict and the efforts being made to bring the conflict to an early end.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting between his colleague, the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) and the deputy commander-in-chief of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, Sheikh Khalifah Bin Zayid, on 24 November with particular regard to bilateral relations and establishing peace between Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Mellor: During my visit to Abu Dhabi I met Sheikh Khalifah Bin Zayid who, in the absence of his father from the United Arab Emirates, was acting ruler of Abu Dhabi. The visit promoted the excellent relations which exist between the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. Our discussions covered a wide range of issues of mutual interest including the Iran-Iraq conflict.

Humanitarian Conference

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the humanitarian conference, as suggested by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr. Atkinson) on 18 November. The Soviet proposal is merely one of a large number of proposals under discussion at the Vienna CSCE follow-up meeting. Our approach to it is governed by the need for major improvements in Soviet implementation of Helsinki commitments.

Mr. J. A. Smith

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the British high commission in Zimbabwe failed to answer four letters sent between October 1986 and October 1987 regarding medical forms required in connection with the disablement pension of Mr. J. A. Smith of Newmarket.

Mrs. Chalker: The British high commission in Zimbabwe received only two such letters between these dates. The first, dated 14 February 1987, was answered on 5 March. The action taken on an undated letter received in late September was reported to my hon. Friend on 19 November by the high commissioner.

Human Rights (USSR)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on violations of human rights in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics over the past 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend the the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 24 July. We monitor the human rights situation in the Soviet Union closely and regularly raise these questions, including individual cases, with the Soviet authorities. Human rights will be on the agenda of the discussions to be held during Mr. Gorbachev's brief visit to the United Kingdom on 7 December.

International Literacy Year

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part his Department will play in the United Nations International Literacy Year of 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On 20 November we supported the resolution in the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly which formally proclaimed 1990 as the International Literacy Year. In deciding how to allocate our bilateral aid we shall continue to attach considerable importance to the vital role that education can play in the development of aid-recipient countries. We shall also continue to make clear in the appropriate form that we support the international community's efforts to eradicate illiteracy worldwide.

United Nations (Financial Crisis)

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to respond to the appeal by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the context of the United Nations financial crisis.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom has always paid its assessed contribution to the regular budget of the United Nations promptly and in full. We share the Secretary-General's concern that, by mid-November, as many as 93 member states had failed to meet their financial obligations. We have exceptionally agreed to advance $9 million against our assessed contribution for 1988.

VAT

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which goods and services are zero-rated with respect to value added tax in the individual member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

According to the latest information available, zero-rating is applied in the individual member states of the European Community to the following goods and services:

France: None

Germany: None

Greece: None

Luxembourg: None

Netherlands: None

Belgium: The supply of daily and weekly newspapers.

Denmark: Sale and hire of aircraft and of ships of not less than 5 gross tons register, other than sports aircraft and pleasure craft;
Repairs, maintenance and installation work performed on aircraft and ships covered by the point above, and on their permanent equipment, and materials supplied by the enterprise concerned for these purposes;
Sales of newspapers which are normally published in not less than one monthly issue;
Subscriptions for foreign periodicals from a foreign publisher on behalf of a subscriber.

Ireland:
The carriage of goods in Ireland in execution of a contract to transfer the goods to a place outside Ireland;
Animal feeding stuff (excluding feeding stuff for domestic pets);
Fertiliser which is supplied in units of not less than 10 kilograms;
Services provided by the Commissioners of Irish Lights;
Gold supplied to the Central Bank of Ireland;
Life-saving services provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution;
Food and drink of a kind used for human consumption (excluding certain products such as alcoholic beverages, manufactured beverages, ice cream and confectionery);
Medicine of a kind used for human oral consumption;
Medicine of a kind used for animal oral consumption (excluding medicine for domestic pets);
Seeds, plants, trees, etc, of a kind used in order to produce food;
Printed books and booklets including atlases (excluding newspapers, periodicals, catalogues, diaries, etc);
Articles of children's personal clothing of sizes appropriate to averagely built children not more than 10 years but excluding clothing made with fur skin and articles not labelled with size or age;
Sole and upper leather of a kind supplied for the manufacture and repair of footwear, heels etc;
Medical appliances, namely invalid carriages, crutches, orthopaedic appliances and other artificial parts of the body (excluding artificial teeth); coal, gas, electricity, wax candles (plain, white and undecorated), hydrocarbon oil of a kind used for heating or lighting.

Italy:
The supply of daily newspapers;
The supply of land liable to be used as building land;
Supplies of unwrought gold;
Supplies of ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal (including work carried out with this scrap metal).

Portugal:
Supplies of basic food products;
Agricultural imports (animal feed, live animals, plants, tools, etc);
Supplies of newspapers and periodicals;
Books;
Medicines;
Artificial limbs, orthopaedic articles;

Spain:
Legal services provided by barristers and solicitors;
The services of sporting associations recognised by the state as being of public utility, when provided to individuals participating in a sport or in physical education, provided that the services are directly linked to the said activities;
Sporting entertainment of an amateur nature.

United Kingdom:
Food of a kind used for human consumption and animal feeding stuffs, with the exception of certain prepared products such as ice cream, chocolates, manufactured beverages or beverages chargeable with any excise duty and pet foods;

Seeds or other means of propagation of plants comprised in food of a kind used for human consumption or animal feeding stuffs;

Live animals of a kind generally used as, or yielding or producing, food for human consumption;

Sewerage services;

Water other than distilled water;

Books, newspapers, journals, periodicals, music, maps;

The supply of magnetic tape and tape recorders to the Royal National Institute for the Blind;

The supply to a charity of wireless receiving sets and of cassette tape recorders solely for gratuitous loan to the blind;

The supply of information to newspapers and to the public;

Coal, gas, electricity, hydrocarbon oil (except that on which excise duty has been or is to be charged);

Construction of buildings (ie the granting, by a person constructing a building, of a major interest in the building, and the supply, in the course of the construction or demolition of any building, of any services other than the services of an architect, etc.);

The supply, by a person supplying the services mentioned above, of certain materials;

Certain services performed outside the United Kingdom, supplies to businesses belonging outside the United Kingdom, supplies of certain insurance in connection with international transportation, supplies of certain services in connection with the importation or exportation of goods;

The supply, repair or maintenance of commercial ships and aircraft and equipment of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution;

The transport of passengers in any vehicle, ship or aircraft capable of carrying not less than 12 passengers, or by the Post Office, or on any scheduled flight;

The transport of passengers or freight to or from a place outside the United Kingdom;

Certain services in connection with the handling of ships or aircraft or goods carried in them;

The supply of certain caravans and houseboats:

Supplies between central banks and between them and members of the London gold market of gold held in the United Kingdom;

The issue by a bank of a note payable to bearer on demand;

Drugs, medicines, medical and surgical appliances, etc. (excluding hearing aids, dentures, spectacles, etc.);

The supply by a charity of any goods which have been donated for sale;

The supply to a charity of the publication in any newspaper, journal or periodical of certain advertisements to raise money for or make known the objects of the charity;

The supply to certain charities of medicinal products for treatment or medical research;

Articles designed as clothing or footwear for young children;

Protective boots and helmets for individual use.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Histories

Mr. George: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many official histories have been commissioned by the Government since 1957; what are their titles; when each was commenced; when each was completed; who were the authors; and what was the cost of each;

(2) how many Government-sponsored official histories are currently in preparation; when they were commissioned; who are the authors; what are the estimated dates of completion; and what is the estimated cost in each case.

The Prime Minister: The original programme of official histories commissioned by the War Cabinet covered the military and civil history of the second world war. The final volume in this series "History of the War in the Mediterranean and the Middle East", volume VI, part 3 by General Sir William Jackson, CBE, KCB, MC, will be published during 1988.

Subsequently two further groups of wartime histories were commissioned:

Title	*Author*	*Commissioned*	*Completion/publication*
SOE in France	M. R. D. Foot	1960	1966
SOE in the Far East[1]	C. Cruickshank	1980	1983
SOE in Scandinavia[1]	C. Cruickshank	1984	1986
SOE in Greece[1]	Richard Clogg	1984	Estimated completion 1988
SOE in the Low Countries[1]	M. R. D. Foot	1987	Estimated completion 1989
SOE in Yugoslavia[1]	M. C. Wheeler	1987	1990
British Intelligence in the Second World War[2]			
Vol. I	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1979
Vol. II	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1981
Vol. III (Part I)	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1984

[1] Main preparation and all publication costs met by commercial publishers.
[2] Estimated completion date for this series is 1989.

On 9 March 1966 the then Prime Minister announced that the official programme would be extended to include selected periods or episodes of peace time history. The following were commissioned:

Title	*Author*	*Commissioned*	*Completion/publication*
Environmental Planning	Professor J. B. Cullingworth	1969	Published in 4 vols. between 1975-81
Nationalisation of British Industry	Professor Sir Norman Chester	1969	1975
Colonial Development[1]	D. J. Morgan	1969	Published in 5 vols. 1980
External Economic Policy[2]	Professor L. S. Pressnell	1974	Vol. I published 1987. Vol. II estimated date of completion 1990
Defence Organisation since 1945[2]	Professor D. Cameron Watt	1974	Estimated date of completion 1990

Title	Author	Commissioned	Completion/publication
British Contribution to the Korean Conflict[2]	General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley	1978	Estimated completion date 1988
The Health Service since the War[2]	Dr. Charles Webster	1978	Vol. I due to be published 1988. Estimated completion of vol. II 1992/3

[1] Main preparation and all publication costs met by commercial publishers.
[2] Currently in preparation.

The cost of preparing official histories is borne on the votes of several Government Departments, mainly the Cabinet Office; the cost of printing, publishing and distribution falls to HMSO (revenue from sales goes towards offsetting these costs). It is not possible now without disproportionate cost to itemise the cost of individual histories.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what are the total costs incurred since 1979 in establishing, maintaining and supervising cruise missile facilities and associated works at both Greenham Common and Molesworth under the following headings *(a)* by NATO, *(b)* by the Ministry of Defence, identifying separately the Royal Air Force *(c)* by any other Departments of state and *(d)* by local authorities; and if he will also indicate what moneys have been paid or are owed to Her Majesty's Government by the United States air force for the provision of such facilities.

The Prime Minister: The latest cost estimate for constructing the two cruise missile facilities in the United Kingdom is as follows:

Contributors	£ million
NATO	59·0
Ministry of Defence (MOD)[1]	36·9
United States Air Force (USAF)	78·0
Other United Kingdom Government Departments	0·2
Total	174·1

[1] Costs specifically to the RAF are not readily identifiable.

The cost of security and supervision at both bases since 1979 at current prices is estimated to be £24·9 million. The MOD share of this total was £15·6 million and the USAF made a contribution of £3·4 million. The share of other Government Departments was £0·2 million. Additional policing costs borne by police authorities amounted to £5·7 million.

Maintenance and the provision of base support are the primary responsibility of the USAF.

Questions (Arms Control)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will specify those matters relating to arms control and disarmament upon which *(a)* the Ministry of Defence and *(b)* the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, respectively, answer parliamentary questions; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In general all questions on arms control and disarmament matters should be addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Mojadidi

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet Mr. Mojadidi, the Afghan guerrilla leader currently visiting Britain; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office met Prof. Mojadidi, a leading member of the Afghan resistance alliance, on 1 December and reaffirmed our admiration for the efforts of the Afghan people to liberate their country.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the administration of assistance from the shipbuilding intervention fund for smaller ships.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The intensity of international competition generally diminishes as the size and cost of ships falls. It is therefore sensible to make assistance from the finite resources of the intervention fund variable according to the cost of ships. I realise that yards would appreciate some clear guidance about the support they might reasonably expect from the fund before they bid for orders. I am therefore informing the yards that, in future, offers of assistance from the intervention fund for smaller ships will normally be limited within a sliding ceiling related to the cost of build. Until further notice, the normal maximum for ships costing £10 million to build will be 20 per cent. This will fall by three quarters of one percentage point for each £1 million reduction in the cost of build below £10 million. Within the ceiling, offers will continue to be negotiated as the minimum necessary to secure orders for United Kingdom yards, always provided the rules of the sixth directive on aid to shipbuilding are met. I will look sympathetically at cases for which applications have already been received provided they are likely to result in early orders. This approach will apply both to the public and private sectors.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prisoners

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners detained at the pleasure of the Secretary of State are currently in Northern Ireland prisons who have now served 10 years, 11 years, 12 years, 13 years or more.

Mr. Stanley: There are at present 37 prisoners in Northern Ireland serving sentences of detention during the

pleasure of the Secretary of State. Of these four have served 10 years, seven have served 11 years, 10 have served 12 years and five have served 13 years or more. None has served longer than 14 years.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure, and how many released, in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Stanley: In 1985, one prisoner was sentenced to detention during the pleasure of the Secretary of State and seven prisoners were released; in 1986 there were no prisoners sentenced in this way and 10 were released; so far in 1987, two prisoners have been sentenced and 10 released.

Home Help Service

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many past recipients of home help services have been denied home help services in the past year; and how many of these have been informed of their social security entitlement to benefit for this purpose.

Mr. Needham: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I am, however, aware that the Department of Health and Social Services issued new guidelines earlier this year on entitlement to the home help service. These are being issued in some units of management to reassess individual's need for home help to ensure that the continuing high volume of services is targeted at those most in need.

Suckler Cows

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to increase the suckler cow premium grant to £50 per cow.

Mr. Viggers: The current rate of suckler cow premium, £33·40 per cow, is the maximum rate payable under EC legislation. Review of the rate of premium will no doubt form an important part of the review of the EC beef support measures scheduled to take place during 1988.

Cytology

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cytology laboratories are available in Northern Ireland for processing cervical smear tests; how many such tests have been processed during the last three years for which figures are available; how many weeks it takes to complete processing of these tests; and what backlog currently exists.

Mr. Needham: There are currently four laboratories in Northern Ireland processing cervical smears. The detailed information is set out in the following table. The fall in the number of smears processed in 1985 was due to a higher than usual rate of resignation and sickness amongst trained staff. It takes at least one year fully to train replacements.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*Current backlog*
Total smears processed	73,555	64,736	70,122	7,224

Note: Average processing time is 7·7 weeks.

[1] Diagnostic and repeat smears are given priority and are processed normally within two weeks.

Cervical Cancer

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women in Northern Ireland have died from cervical cancer in the last five years for which figures are available, expressed per thousand women.

Mr. Needham: The information for the last five years for which figures are available is as follows:—

Deaths from Cervical Cancer

Year	*Total number of deaths*	*Rate per 1,000 women*
1982	48	0·06
1983	39	0·05
1984	30	0·04
1985	27	0·03
1986	31	0·04

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the number of women in Northern Ireland who obtain a cervical smear test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The number of women in Northern Ireland who obtain a cervical smear test is not available. A central computerised call and recall system will be introduced next year to ensure that all women aged 20-65 will be called for screening at five-yearly intervals. Once this system is operational it will be possible to determine with accuracy the number of women having cervical smear tests. Laboratory facilities are also being expanded and decentralised to meet the demands which it is anticipated will be generated by the computerised call and recall system.

Cytopathology

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of cytopathology records in Northern Ireland are held on *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Cytopathology laboratories process a variety of test types including cervical smears. The Belfast city hospital cytopathology laboratory has a computer system for managing cervical smear tests. Other cytopathology tests at the Belfast city hospital laboratory and all tests at other cytopathology laboratories are processed manually.

The analysis for cervical smear tests for 1986 is given in the table below :

Cervical Smear Tests—Manual and Computer Processed—1986

	Number	*Percentage*
Manual	15,914	23
Computer	54,208	77
TOTAL	70,122	100

There are computer records for 11,000 non-negative cervical cytology cases identified in the Belfast city hospital laboratory since 1965. Statistics of the number of cases held on manual records systems are not recorded centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Rateable Value

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, he will list those statutory references to rateable value not primarily related to local government finance which have been identified to date.

Mr. Howard: The main statutory references to rateable value appear in the Housing Act 1985; the Rent Act 1977: the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976; the Land Drainage act 1976; the Leasehold Reform Act 1967; and the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. I have today written to my right hon. Friend enclosing detailed lists of the relevant references.

Council House Sales

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Salisbury dated 14 October 1987 on the use of receipts from the sale of council houses by Salisbury district council.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

World Student Games

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will follow up the support his Department has given Sheffield in its bid for the 1991 world student games with the necessary backing to ensure the games' successful staging now that they have been awarded to the city.

Mr. Moynihan: I congratulate Sheffield on the success of its bid to host the 1991 world student games. I know that the city council see this as an opportunity to help them pursue its strategy for regenerating Sheffield. The Government have already recognised the needs of Sheffield by a 37 per cent. increase in urban programme funding for 1987-88. In recent years the urban programme has assisted sports and related projects including Woodburn athletics centre, East End park and Waltheof campus.

I wish the city well in its efforts to raise private finance. It is essential for it to do so. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I have made it clear to Sheffield from the beginning that the Department can neither provide any additional finance or financial guarantee nor relax capital expenditure controls to provide direct assistance for the games.

Land for Energy Development

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the land for energy development report, begun in 1983 by his Department and the Department of the Environment, is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The land for energy study was completed in 1984. There are no plans to publish the group's report.

Local Authorities (Economic Development)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to carry out a review of the economic development activities of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* My right hon. Friend is considering the proper role of local authorities economic development activities, and the question of their statutory powers in the context of the Government's response to the Widdicombe report.

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Deficit Grant)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, what is his current estimate of the amount of deficit grant payable to the coal industry in 1987-88, particularly in respect of redundancy payments; and what are the outturn figures for 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Within the revised external financing limit of £842 million for 1987-88, payment of deficit grant to British Coal is currently forecast at £383 million, of which £214 million relates to deficits of previous years. This is subject to parliamentary approval of an order under section 2 of the Coal Industry Act 1987 and of a Supplementary Estimate later this financial year. It is not possible to identify how much of the deficit is due to redundancy costs or to any other item.

Deficit grant payments during 1986-87 totalled £546 million. For that year redundancy payments to most mineworkers were financed by the redundant mineworkers payments scheme; RMPS payments in 1986-87 totalled £610 million.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Post Office Counters Ltd. is registered for value-added tax purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Post Office Counters Ltd is a member of the Post Office plc VAT group registration.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the use of personal data on the Government data network will affect his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Brooke: The registrar referred to the Government data network in his third annual report to Parliament, welcoming the approach made to him and offering to comment on proposals at a general level. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said in his answer to the hon. Member on 28 October at column *333*, I discussed the Government data network with the registrar on 8 September, and close contact is being maintained with him at official level.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of employer contribution the Government treat as appropriate for public service employees who choose personal pensions, once these are available.

Mr. Brooke: The Social Security Act 1986 gives all employees a new right from 1 July 1988 to opt for personal pensions as an alternative to the state earnings-related scheme or an employer's scheme. The Act requires employers to make an employer contribution for personal pension optants, as part of their national insurance contributions, at a rate no less than the contracted-out rebate, which currently stands at about 4 per cent. of the individual's salary. The Government consider that an employer's contribution at that level would be appropriate for public service employees opting for personal pensions.

Oil Refining (Tax Treatment)

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the treatment under the PRT nomination scheme of oil taken to refining.

Mr. Lilley: Paragraph 5, schedule 8 Finance (No. 2) Act 1987 if triggered by Treasury order, would impose an additional PRT charge on certain transactions. The fear has been expressed that this additional PRT charge could apply to an integrated group's transfers of its own production to refining even where these had not been undertaken in order to minimise PRT. Although concerned to ensure that transfers to refining are not used to undermine the PRT nomination scheme, the Government recognise that there are many such transfers which are not driven by an attempt to reduce tax liabilities. The Government have therefore authorised discussions between the Inland Revenue and the industry to see whether changes are needed to the scheme.

The Government appreciate that, until these conditions are complete, there will inevitably be an element of uncertainty attaching to the tax consequences of current company decisions. We therefore propose, in the event of the Finance (No. 2) Act provisions being triggered while consultations are still continuing, to use the power in paragraph 5 to make transitional arrangements to protect current appropriations and intergroup transfers to refining. These would ensure that the additional PRT charge would not apply to any oil a group takes to refining before the date of the Treasury order itself.

Civil Servants (Industrial Action)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many working days were lost in the *(a)* Treasury, *(b)* Inland Revenue and *(c)* Customs and Excise due to industrial action by civil servants in the period 1976-86.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* Records are not available for the period 1976-80. The details for 1981-86 are as follows:

Man days lost due to industrial action

	Treasury	*Inland Revenue*	*Customs and Excise*
1981	77	298,221	75,271
1982	—	1,964	294
1983	—	205	19
1984	262	17,425	7,211
1985	—	296	—
1986	21	838	1,035
Total	360	318,949	83,830

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education Lecturers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the effect on young people and on the morale of further education lecturers caused by the continuing dispute over pay and conditions of employment; if the assistance of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service has been sought; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is regrettable that the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education is continuing to promote industrial action by its members. The view of the local authority employers is that this action has not yet caused significant disruption to the effective provision of the further education service, and so the interests of students have not been seriously damaged.

The local authority employers have made a pay offer worth 9·3 per cent. in a full year in return for which they are seeking agreement on more cost-effective working arrangements, the need for which was accepted by the lecturers in the context of the 1985 settlement but on which no progress has so far been made. The assistance of the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service has not been sought.

I hope that a settlement will be reached soon in the best interests of the students and of industry and commerce as well as of the lecturers themselves.

Primary and Secondary Schools

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he intends to inform parents, teachers, school governors and others about proposed changes in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The volume of responses to the consultative documents issued this summer on various aspects of the proposed reforms in education indicates the great interest felt by many sections of the community in the Government's proposals for education reform. I am publishing this week a booklet to inform public debate during Parliament's consideration of the Education Reform Bill. The booklet is being sent to the clerk of the governing body and the head teacher of every maintained school in England. Copies of the booklet have been placed in the Library of the House.

Education Act (Report)

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to reply to the report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, entitled "Special Educational Needs, Implementation of the Education Act" 1981 HC 201/I.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today sent the Government response to the report to the Clerk to the Committee. I have placed a copy in the Library.

City Technology College, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of opposition from the Nottingham county council education committee, he still plans to go ahead with Government funding for a city technology college in Nottingham.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nottingham CTC trust is planning to open a city technology college in September 1989. It has the support of the Government. The trust will continue to exchange information with the Nottinghamshire LEA.

Teacher Training

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the standard of teacher-training available to university lecturers and teachers.

Mr. Jackson: As part of the programme of action to improve efficiency in universities agreed with my right hon. Friend in November 1986, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals published in April a code of practice on the important matter of academic staff training. The committee intends to survey universities' implementation of the code by mid-1988 and publish its findings.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service (Leicestershire)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what were the proposed staffing levels for solicitors and barristers when the Crown Prosecution Service was established in Leicestershire; and what are the present levels.

The Attorney-General: The proposed staffing level for solicitors and barristers when the Crown Prosecution Service was established in Leicestershire was 17. At present there are 22 posts for lawyers in Leicestershire of which nine were filled as at 30 November 1987.

Legal Aid (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how much legal aid money has been paid to private solicitors to cover waiting time at court in each year since 1980 in the legal aid area covering Leicester.

The Attorney-General: Information about the cost to legal aid of waiting time in the Crown court has been collected only since April 1986. From then until March 1987, £24,000 was paid to solicitors in respect of bills determined by the Crown court at Leicester. That amount includes the cost of time spent waiting at prisons to see clients in conference. Information about the cost of waiting time in magistrates' courts is not at present readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

DEFENCE

Cadet Forces

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the number of young people who are members of the cadet forces in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The figures for 31 March 1987, the latest complete set of strength figures for the cadet movement, are:

	Number
Sea Cadet Corps	15,426
Sea Scouts	4,977
Portsmouth Area Volunteer Cadet Corps	1,189
Army Cadet Force	43,617
Air Training Corps	38,180
Combined Cadet Force	42,318
Total number of Cadets	145,707

Service Pensioners' Widows

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any proposals to enable the widows of service pensioners, who married or remarried after their retirement before 5 April 1978, to be able to benefit from the armed forces pension scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are no proposals to extend the existing provisions of the armed forces pension scheme as they relate to post-retirement marriages. They are consistent with those of other public service schemes.

Service Recruits (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men and women have joined Her Majesty's forces from the Easington constituency in the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the numbers of entrants to Her Majesty's forces are not maintained on the basis of addresses of domicile within parliamentary constituencies. It is therefore assumed that entrants to the services from the Easington constituency would form part of the recruitment through the Royal Navy careers information offices at Hartlepool and Sunderland, Army careers information offices at Darlington, Durham, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Sunderland and Royal Air Force careers information offices at Darlington, Middlesbrough and Sunderland. The total numbers for these offices in the last three financial years are as follows:

	Numbers
1984-85	1,200
1985-86	1,227
1986-87	1,249

These numbers exclude all officer entrants, Army-rejoined reservists and, prior to 1986-87, service women entrants to the Queen Alexandra's royal naval nursing service, all of whom are recruited centrally.

Weather Forecasts (West Wales)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 13 November, *Official Report* column 334, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the weather forecasts provided for the broadcasting services in respect of west Wales; and if he will review the geographical boundaries at present in use for these forecasts.

Mr. Sainsbury: A check is kept on the accuracy of the weather forecasts broadcast each day on BBC Radio 4 at

07.55 (for the day ahead) and at 17.55 (for the following day). For Wales, the average percentage correct over the past five years has been 83. The length, format and style of presentation are determined by the broadcasting authorities.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether construction work at RAF Molesworth will continue after the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The operational facilities at RAF Molesworth are essentially complete, and the remaining defence works are scheduled to be finished by the end of January 1988.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his answer of 25 November, the United Kingdom nuclear requirements envisage a 12-warhead Trident missile.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on warhead and missile numbers is classified.

Hong Kong

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the current level of military commitment in Hong Kong; and if he will reduce it.

Mr. Ian Stewart: British forces are stationed in Hong Kong to assist in maintaining stability through support as appropriate to the needs of defence and internal security of the territory. It is our intention to maintain the garrison at a strength sufficient to discharge this responsibility, up to the date of transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China on 1 July 1997.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider reducing the proportion of the expenditure on British forces in Hong Kong met from Hong Kong sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The current defence costs agreement between the British and Hong Kong Governments, which covers the apportionment of the costs of British forces in Hong Kong between the two Governments, is due to expire on 31 March 1988. Negotiations are under way between representatives of the two Governments about arrangements to apply after that date.

Armed Forces (Joint Procurement)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with progress towards joint European procurement for the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Joint procurement arrangements with our European allies, as well as with the United States of America and Canada, have served us well. A number of the equipments already used by our forces stem from them, and new ones are under study or development. International collaboration will be of increasing importance for the future, and we are working actively with our allies both to increase the number of joint projects and to explore new arrangements which offer the prospect of mutual benefit and value for money.

Historic Buildings, Woolwich

Mr. John Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the historic buildings in the Woolwich area which are to be considered by his Department's historic military buildings committee, indicating when he expects decisions on their future to be announced.

Mr. Freeman: The historic military buildings committee will be visiting the Woolwich area in January and is expected to look at the following historic buildings:

Royal Arsenal West

Middle Gate House
Royal Carriage Factory
Shell Foundry Gate House
Armstrong Gun Factory
Grand Store Complex
Academy Building
Pedimental Building, New Laboratory Square
Riverside Guard Houses
Royal Brass Foundry
Royal Laboratory Pavilions
Dial Arch
Main Guard House
Verbruggen's House

Woolwich Garrison

Connaught Barracks

The future location of the main organisation occupying the site, the directorate general of quality assurance, is currently under review and until this is settled it is difficult to take decisions about the future of the historic buildings on the site.

Falkland Islands (Postal Service)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to public funds of the family-only air-letters available for the service personnel in the Falkland Islands and on Ascension Island; and if he will list any proposals he has for any changes in this service in the future.

Mr. Freeman: The cost to public funds of the free air-letter service to and from the Falklands and Ascension Islands was approximately £173,000 in 1986-87. All allowances and concessions are subject to periodic review. No decision has been taken to change this concession.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Royal Air Force police, expressed as full-time equivalent staff, are currently assigned to covert field monitoring of low-flying aircraft; and what changes have taken place in these staffing levels since 1977;

(2) when the practice of covert monitoring of low flying by Royal Air Force police was introduced;

(3) if he will make a statement on the methods used by Royal Air Force police involved in covert monitoring of low-flying activity to assess height and speed of low-flying aircraft;

(4) if he will list the locations and dates of periods of covert monitoring of low-flying operations conducted by Royal Air Force police since 1974;

(5) on how many occasions since 1974 disciplinary proceedings have been instituted against pilots found to have been infringing low-flying regulations by Royal Air Force police involved in covert monitoring in low-flying areas, but where no complaints were received from the public.

Mr. Freeman: I will write to the hon. Member.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Research Assistants

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House if he will give a breakdown, by party, of the numbers and percentages of hon. and right hon. Members who currently employ three or more research assistants.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is as follows:

	Percentages
12 Conservatives	1·8
13 Labour	2·0
8 Liberal	1·2
1 Plaid Cymru	0·15
1 Social Democrat	0·15

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House if he will give a breakdown, by party, of the numbers and percentages of hon. and right hon. Members who are currently allocated three or more desks for use by secretaries and research assistants.

Mr. Wakeham: No right hon. or hon. Member has been allocated more than one desk for use by a secretary or research assistant in any of the secretaries' typing rooms. However, the use of desks within rooms allocated to right hon. and hon. Members is a matter for them.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House if he will list the total number of research assistants' security passes which have been issued in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House how many inquiries from individuals, other than Members, have been dealt with by the Library in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what was the estimated cost of dealing with these inquiries in each of those years.

Mr. Wakeham: A detailed breakdown of inquiries received from Members' secretaries and research assistants on behalf of their Members, as distinct from inquiries placed direct by Members, and the estimated cost of dealing with those inquiries, is not available. However, in 1980 the Library carried out a four-week survey of recorded research inquiries, which showed that out of a total of 576,152 such inquiries were received via Members' personal staff, or 26·4 per cent. of the total. Similarly, during the month of November 1987, 704 reference inquiries were received via Members' personal staff by the main Library's reference services section out of a total of 2,612 such inquiries, or 27 per cent. of the total.

Inquiries answered each year in writing by the research division for peers and other non-Members' excluding Members' personal staff were as follows:

Year	*Inquiries*	*Percentage of total research inquiries*
1986	101	1·3
1985	120	1·6
1984	79	1·1
1983	112	1·7
1982	98	1·5

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House (1) if he will make it his policy to seek to limit to one the numbers of research assistants employed by a Member who may be issued with a pass to the Palace of Westminster at any given time; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will, in the interests of security, seek to make it a requirement for the issuing of a security pass for the Palace of Westminster that the holder has been resident in the United Kingdom for the previous six months; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will seek to limit research assistants' access to the main Parliament building to holders of 9B passes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 10 November, control over access to the precincts of the House is to be considered by the Services Committee; and I am sure that the question of research assistants and the issue of security passes will be included in that examination.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House whether he has received any representations from staff and officers of the House concerning the numbers of research assistants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. But any such representations, submitted by officers and staff of the House, would of course be given consideration by the Services Committee, along with any other representations received.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House how many individuals currently holding research assistants' passes have held a security pass for three or more consecutive years.

Mr. Wakeham: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House how many: (i) Liberal, (ii) SDP, (iii) Nationalist party hon. and right hon. Members currently employ *(a)* one research assistant, *(b)* two research assistants, *(c)* three research assistants, *(d)* four research assistants, *(e)* five research assistants, *(f)* six research assistants and *(g)* seven or more research assistants.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

(i) *Liberals*
(a) 1 Research Assistant — 4 Members
(b) 2 Research Assistants — 1 Member
(c) 3 Research Assistants — 1 Member
(d) 4 Research Assistants — 1 Member
(e) 5 Research Assistants — 2 Members
(f) 6 Research Assistants — 1 Member
(g) 7 or more Research Assistants — 3 Members

(ii) *Social Democrats*
(a) 1 Research Assistant — 3 Members
(c) 3 Research Assistants — 1 Member
(b), *(d)*, *(e)*, *(f)* and *(g)* are not applicable

(iii) *Nationalist Parties*
(a) 1 Research Assistant — 7 Members
(b) 2 Research Assistants — 2 Members
(c), (d), (e), (f) and *(g)* are not applicable

Photocopiers

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House what is his estimate of how many copies have been made on photocopiers in the House in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what has been the total cost of supplying, maintaining and running the photocopying machines in each of those years.

Mr. John Wakeham: Figures are not held for the total number of copies made in the House. Based on the expenditure figures given in the table and the average cost of copies as billed through HMSO an assessment of the number of copies made is:

Year	*Number*
1982-83	10,000,000
1983-84	11,000,000
1984-85	14,000,000
1985-86	16,000,000
1986-87	16,500,000

Photocopier hire charges, excluding VAT, which include engineering, maintenance and consumables other than paper, for the last five years are as follows:

Year	*£*
1982-83	128,000
1983-84	157,000
1984-85	197,000
1985-86	224,000
1986-87	233,000

Norman Shaw North Library

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House what has been the cost of running the Norman Shaw North branch library in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: Staffing for the branch library is provided on a rota basis by the public information office of the Library's parliamentary division. The cost of staffing can therefore only be stated approximately. The figures, which do not include national insurance contributions or other employers' overheads, are as follows:

Year	*Estimated Cost £*
1987	47,000
1986	45,000
1985	35,000
1984	33,000
1983	32,000

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Leader of the House how many inquiries have been dealt with by the Norman Shaw North branch library from individuals, other than Members, in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of inquiries from Members' personal staff dealt with in the branch library over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Telephoned inquiries*	*Inquiries lodged in person*	*Total*
1987[1]	7,391	5,110	12,501
1986	9,152	6,642	15,794
1985	8,650	6,716	15,366
1984	8,840	8,464	17,304
1983	6,019	6,680	12,699

[1] To 30 November.

1983 and 1987 were General Election years, during which no Members' personal staff were allowed to use the branch library for a one-month period. The figures in the table exclude the inquiries from the general public which are handled by the public information office.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport, London (Financial Support)

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are proposed for the financial support of public transport in London following the reform of local government finance.

Mr. David Mitchell: At present I am empowered by section 13 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 to recover up to two thirds of my annual grant to London Regional Transport by means of a levy on rating authorities in London. With the replacement of the present rating system by improved arrangements for local taxation, this levy will no longer be appropriate and I propose then to abolish it. LRT's rapidly reducing need for external support will be found entirely from the Exchequer. As a consequence, there will be no need to allow for public transport support in calculating the revenue support grant to authorities' collection funds in London. London community charge payers will therefore pay the same for spending at need as charge payers elsewhere, even though they will not have to contribute directly to the financing of public transport. These arrangements are intended to provide that London charge payers will not be unfairly advantaged when the financing of public transport in London becomes wholly a national responsibility.

Breath Test Equipment

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards the sale in the United Kingdom of breath test equipment designed to enable drivers to test their own alcohol/breath levels.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We discourage the use of devices marketed for self-testing alcohol levels. As this month's edition of "Which" makes clear, they can give results which are open to misinterpretation. Breath tests taken before all the alcohol consumed has been absorbed into the blood stream could mislead drivers into thinking that they are below the legal limit, when further absorption would put them above it. Such devices can also encourage drivers to drink up to the legal limit.

The only safe answer is never to mix drinking and driving. We will continue to press that message home.

Greater Manchester (Buses)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the

number of buses operating in Greater Manchester *(a)* before deregulation and *(b)* after deregulation of the service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Detailed information on the number of buses operating in Greater Manchester is not available although it is known that there has been a substantial increase. Bus mileage has gone up from 64·7 million miles before deregulation to 83·9 million miles in November 1987 (an increase of nearly 30 per cent.). Most of this is accounted for by new minibus services introduced in the competitive market created by deregulation.

Airline Competition

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to increase competition between airlines on all international routes out of Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the White Paper on airline competition policy (Cmnd. 9366). Over the past three years numerous steps have been taken to increase competition at all United Kingdom airports in accordance with that policy.

Aircraft Noise (London)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to seek to eliminate aircraft noise in west London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Elimination of noise would require silent aircraft or the closure of Heathrow airport. The world's leading international airport is of vital importance to the nation's prosperity. It provides direct employment for 47,000 people and generates some 25,000 additional jobs in the immediate area.

The Government are taking steps to reduce noise disturbance in surrounding areas. The ban of non noise-certificated jets on the UK register from 1 January 1986 has been successful in environmental terms. It will be followed by a similar ban of foreign-registered noisy jets from the beginning of next year.

We are now turning our attention to the next generation of jets, the so-called chapter 2 types. With our partners in Europe, we are examining ways in which they too might be gradually phased out, in favour of modern chapter 3 aircraft which make very much less noise than their predecessors.

The Secretary of State has designated Heathrow airport for noise regulation purposes. The Government have placed restrictions on the number and type of aircraft movements at specified hours at night. Immediately after take-off, aircraft are required to keep to a small number of defined routes, chosen to avoid as far as possible, major built-up areas. They are also required to comply with maximum noise limits, by day and by night.

The present restrictions on aircraft movements at night apply until March 1988. We have recently consulted my hon. Friend, and other hon. Members whose constituencies are near the airport, on our proposals for night restrictions thereafter. We propose to reduce the quota for night flights, limiting the number of flights in future to about the present level. We propose to ban departures in the small hours by all but the quiter modern aircraft.

Regular monitoring of the daytime noise climate around Heathrow has shown that the area affected by noise disturbance has been considerably reduced in recent years. The area in excess of 35 NNI (noise and number index) was reduced from 573 sq. kilometres in 1980 to 378 sq. kilometres in 1986.

Heathrow Airport Limited already monitors the noise of each departing aircraft. BAA plc is working with the Department in the development of a new system for monitoring noise and track-keeping in the vicinity of the airport. When this is ready we shall consider new noise limits which could take into account the relatively low noise levels of modern aircraft.

Railways Inspectorate

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vacancies currently there are in the railways inspectorate; for how long each has remained unfulfilled; what is the current establishment of the railways inspectorate; how this has altered in each year since 1979; and what plans he has for the future establishment of the inspectorate.

Mr. David Mitchell: The establishment of the railway inspectorate in 1979 and now (1987) is shown in the table:

	1979	*1987*
Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways	1	1
Inspecting Officer of Railways	4	4
Assistant Inspecting Officer of Railways	2	4
Principal Railway Employment Inspector	1	3
Railway Employment Inspector	14	12
Administrative Staff	15	15
Total	37	39

Two railway employment inspector posts were upgraded to principal in 1981. Between 1985 and 1987 an additional inspecting officer post was held supernumerary to the establishment. In 1987 the supernumerary post was abolished and two additional assistant inspecting officer posts created.

Between 1979 and 1987 there have been up to two posts in the administrative staff vacant for short periods. The only other shortfall has occurred in the railway employment inspector posts where the vacancies at the end of each calendar year have been:

Year end vacancies

	Number
Up to 1983	Nil
1984	1
1985	1
1986	5
1987	5

The inspectorate's future establishment will be considered in the light of the recent departmental review.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the regularity of the inspection programme of the railways inspectorate.

Mr. David Mitchell: Inspections carried out by the railways inspectorate cover a variety of subjects. Inspections of new railways, for example, Docklands, of important alterations to existing ones, for example, electrification, and of new or altered level crossings are carried out under the railway and level crossing legislation. These inspections are planned up to a year ahead and

respond to the new works submitted to the Department for inspection as required by the legislation. The same remarks apply to the inspections carried out by the inspectorate in Northern Ireland, Hong Kong and Singapore under agency agreements. Other inspections are carried out by the inspectorate's railway employment inspectors in furtherance of the agency agreement between the Department and the Health and Safety Executive. These are planned ahead and are based on a system of priorities, with emphasis placed on areas of identified hazard. During 1986, 36 new works inspections were carried out in the United Kingdom plus a small number in Hong Kong and Singapore, together with 101 inspections of modernised level crossings, and 1,067 inspections of railway work sites and installations were undertaken by railway employment inspectors. The work load this year is similar.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the regularity of the training programme for newly recruited railway inspectors.

Mr. David Mitchell: In recent years newly recruited inspectors have all had professional railway qualifications and experience. On recruitment they receive standard initial training in their duties as inspectors and thereafter receive continuation training relative to their individual needs. All inspectors are expected to keep themselves up-to-date by reading professional journals and attending and contributing to meetings of learned societies. The inspectorate arranges regular training conferences.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of expenditure on training in the railways inspectorate in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: In the financial year 1986-87 the money spent by the railway inspectorate on training fees or equivalent was £6,698. This sum does not include any salary costs for those under training.

London Underground (Train Doors)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects London Underground to report on the problem of train doors opening on the London Underground whilst trains are moving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 November 1987. No time has been set for the report referred to in that reply, although London Underground Limited has undertaken to produce it as soon as possible.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints he has received since 1 January 1987 about aircraft noise at Gatwick.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 1,947 between 1 January and 30 November.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the results of his Department's monitoring of aircraft noise at night at Gatwick airport in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table shows the number of infringements of the night noise limit of 102 perceived noise decibels for subsonic jets on take-off from Gatwick. The noise is monitored by Gatwick Airport Limited at four noise monitoring points. Information on infringements is given to the airport consultative committee and to the airlines.

	Number of infringements	*Percentage of total jet departures*
1985	39	1·07
1986	11	0·26

The Department has also commissioned a survey of night noise in the vicinity of the airport year by year, starting with summer 1987. The results of the first survey will not be ready for some time. We shall make the results of this and future surveys available in the form of noise contours, as explained in our consultation paper on proposals for night flights at Gatwick from 1 April 1988.

Airspace (London)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the London terminal manoeuvring area has not included the operations of civil airlines operating out of Stolport in east London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for air traffic management through the National Air Traffic Services (NATS). The authority has told us that NATS is not at present able to introduce procedures to include safely London City airport traffic within the London terminal manoeuvring area (LTMA). Moreover, it could not yet be handled there without an unacceptable effect on Gatwick and Heathrow traffic. This was made clear during the planning of London City airport. It is unlikely that NATS will be able to implement the necessary changes so as to include London City aircraft within the London terminal manoeuvring area before the end of 1988.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what statistics are kept of air movements by all flying equipment within the London terminal manoeuvring area;

(2) what is the current capacity of the London terminal manoeuvring area; and what is the maximum capacity for aircraft movements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) for all aspects of airspace management. The authority has told us that the practical capacity of the London terminal maneouvring area is 130 aircraft movements per hour and the theoretical capacity is 147 movements per hour.

During 1986 the number of aircraft movements within the LTMA were as follows:

	Number
North west sector	122,954
North east sector	147,184
South west sector	178,198
South east sector	146,071

These figures cannot be aggregated to form a total movement rate because aircraft may fly in more than one sector.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from civil airline operators on the use of uncontrolled airspace by flying equipment over the London area in the last three months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to seek to alter the reporting procedures for near misses or other incidents involving civil airline aircraft and other flying equipment in the Stolport area of London;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Civil Aviation Authority into each of the near misses and other incidents reported in the Stolport area by pilots and others.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) for all aspect of airspace management. All airmiss reports in United Kingdom airspace are investigated initially by the joint airmiss section of NATS. They are then examined by the joint airmiss working group, which is comprised of representatives of civil and military aviation bodies. In order to ensure full and complete reporting by all concerned, the results of an airmiss investigation are not made public. There are no plans to alter airmiss or other incident reporting procedures in the United Kingdom.

One airmiss report has been filed by the pilot of a London City airport aircraft and is currently under investigation by NATS.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement as to the powers and responsibilities of Civil Aviation Authority aircraft controllers in southern England in relation to the operations of civil airlines flying in uncontrolled airspace in the vicinity of Stolport;

(2) what information he has on procedures for notifying civil airline pilots in uncontrolled airspace in the vicinity of Stolport of the presence of other flying equipment including hangliders, parachutists, microlights, helicopters, balloons and private aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services, for all aspects of airspace management. The Authority has told us that the air traffic services and procedures available for pilots of aircraft flying in uncontrolled airspace are set out in the United Kingdom air pilot. These include radar and non-radar services. Responsibility for the decision whether or not any particular service is required rests with the aircraft pilot.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement as to the responsibilities of the civil airlines for aircraft control movements in uncontrolled airspace in the vicinity of Stolport in east London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A civil airline operator's responsibilities are set out in part V of the Air Navigation Order 1985—S.I. 1985/1643. It is the responsibility of the aircraft commander to satisfy himself before the aircraft takes off that the flight can safely be made, taking into account the latest information available as to the route and aerodrome to be used, the weather reports and forecasts available, and any alternative course of action which can be adopted in case the flight cannot be completed as planned.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to on how many occasions, since the opening of Stolport, radar equipment at Heathrow, Gatwick or West Drayton has failed to function in tracking the flightpath of civil aircraft flying under 2,500 ft within 30 miles of Stolport in east London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services, for all aspects of airspace management. The authority has told us that the Thames radar service specifically provided for London City airport aircraft has been fully available. A complementary lower air space radar service provided by Gatwick airport for aircraft in uncontrolled air space has been available 66 per cent. of the time. Use of the service is not mandatory and it is provided on an on-request basis, subject to the capacity of the air traffic unit.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will institute an inquiry into the dangers that arise from flying in uncontrolled air space over London;

(2) what is his policy for the future control of air movements in uncontrolled air space over the London area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the National Air Traffic Services, for all aspects of airspace management. Any decision to institute an inquiry into flying in uncontrolled airspace over London is a matter solely for the authority.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether flights by non-passenger military aircraft are permitted in uncontrolled airspace over the east London area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, in accordance with the Rules of the Air and Air Traffic Control Regulations 1985—S.I. 1985/1714—and military flying regulations—joint service publication 318.

SCOTLAND

Shipbuilding Industry (Redundancies)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding industry in Strathclyde during the period from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers which were confirmed to the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in the shipbuilding industry in Strathclyde in the period from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986 totalled 11,912.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by each district health authority, the cost of abortions in money and as a percentage of all health services expenditure, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally. Health board accounts do not show separately the amounts spent on abortion.

Cytopathology

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of cytopathology records in Scotland are held on *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual records; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not centrally available.

Fluoridation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of funds allocated in 1986 and 1987 for the purposes of water fluoridation; and how much will be allocated in 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are currently no water fluoridation schemes in operation in Scotland and it has not been the practice in the past to allocate funds to health boards specifically for this purpose. In general therefore the position is that health boards should expect to meet the cost of any future fluoridation schemes from within their normal allocations, but in the light of what is said in the Government's White Paper "Promoting Better Health", I shall consider whether there is any scope for giving them further support.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each postal code area and local authority ward in East Lothian district the number of people who were unemployed in October 1987, October 1986 and October 1983.

Mr. Lang: Postcode sectors do not necessarily match district boundaries. The number of unemployed claimants within postcode sectors in East Lothian district in October 1983, October 1986 and October 1987 is shown in table 1. The number of unemployed claimants within each ward in East Lothian district in October 1983, 1986 and 1987 is shown in table 2. Figures for October 1983 are not comparable with those for October 1986 and October 1987 because of changes in the coverage of the count.

This information is available in the Library.

Table 1
Unemployed claimants—East Lothian postcode sectors

		October 1983[1]	*October 1986*	*October 1987*
EH21 6	Musselburgh	245	303	326
EH21 7	Musselburgh	322	367	359
EH21 8	Musselburgh	465	530	488
EH31 2	Musselburgh	40	65	52
EH32 0	Musselburgh	264	303	297
EH32 9	Musselburgh	572	555	606
EH33 1	Musselburgh	274	283	308
EH33 2	Musselburgh	335	397	385
EH34 5	Musselburgh	50	39	53
EH35 5	Musselburgh	101	116	95
EH36 5	Haddington	n/a	16	15
EH39 4	Musselburgh	124	175	145
EH39 5	Musselburgh	43	84	51
EH40 3	Haddington	20	37	31
EH41 3	Haddington	129	149	160
EH41 4	Haddington	183	219	203
EH42 1	Haddington	228	379	395
	Total	3,395	4,017	3,969

[1] This column excludes some unemployed claimants for whom postcodes were not available at the time of compilation.

Table 2
East Lothian District

Ward	*Unemployed Claimants* *October 1983*	*October 1986*	*October 1987*
Carberry	379	398	380
Cockenzie	189	181	197
Dirleton	107	156	116
Dunbar	189	274	303
East Linton	102	179	154
Gladsmuir	114	125	112
Haddington	172	190	198
Lammermuir	233	225	231
Musselburgh Central	185	222	226
Musselburgh East	327	302	267
Musselburgh South	107	139	157
Musselburgh West	169	166	173
North Berwick	146	194	157
Prestonpans East	273	241	251
Prestonpans West	360	323	355
Tranent North	369	353	383
Tranent Ormiston	308	327	292
Total	3,729	3,995	3,952

Hospitals

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the estimated number of patients on in-patient waiting lists by speciality, in Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available. Information relating to Lothian health board is, however, published in table 6.5 of "Scottish Health Statistics 1986-87", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Doctors' Lists

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many rural practices will be affected by the decision to increase the list size to qualify for full basic practice allowance.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The White Paper "Promoting Better Health" stated that the Government intend to tighten the qualifications for basic practice allowance by increasing the minimum list size and the average number of hours spent per week in surgery sessions. We intend to discuss the new criteria with the medical profession.

Community Service

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the funding of community service orders.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is prepared in principle to offer local authorities 100 per cent. funding for community service orders with effect from 1 April 1989.

Water Supplies

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report the progress made in dealing with public drinking water supplies in Scotland which do not yet meet the standard for lead set in the European Directive relating to the quality of drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish water authorities — the regional and islands councils — are responsible for implementing EC directive 80/778/EEC in relation to public water supplies as part of their statutory duty to provide a supply of wholesome water for domestic purposes.

At the Government's request, the water authorities carried out surveys to identify those supplies which did not meet the directive's standard for lead concentrations at the consumer's tap. The surveys revealed that, when the directive came into force in July 1985, 103 water supplies in Scotland did not comply with the directive. The Government therefore applied to the European Commission for a delay in complying with the lead standard under article 20 of the directive in respect of those supplies and others in the United Kingdom.

The Scottish water authorities are making good progress: 18 of the 103 supplies have already been improved to the directive's standard and at least 47 more will comply by the end of 1989. By that stage, only about 15 per cent. of the Scottish population will be living in supply areas which do not comply fully with the directive: and the proportion who actually receive drinking water with lead levels in excess of the directive's standard will be very much less than this—probably around 3 per cent. These remaining supplies, which serve small remote rural areas, will take a little longer to improve. My Department is pursuing, in discussions with all the water authorities concerned, the aim of reducing lead concentrations to the directive's requirements by the end of 1989 or soon thereafter.

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how many the numbers of long stay mental handicap patients at Lennox Castle hospital have fallen since1979; and how much of this fall can be attributed to (*a*) the death of patients, (*b*) the non-admission of new patients and (*c*) planned resettlement of patients in the community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* The specific information requested by the hon. Member is not available centrally, but the following tables show residents in and discharges into the community at 31 December of each year from Lennox Castle.

Table 1: Lennox Castle—Long Stay (2 Years+) Residents 1979-86

	Residents
1979	1,253
1980	1,239
1981	1,221
1982	1,198
1983	1,122
1984	1,011
1985	971
[1]1986	967

[1] Provisional.

Table 2: Lennox Castle—Discharges of Long Stay (2 Years+) Patients 1979-85

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Discharged home living with relatives or friends	10	5	2	9	10	7	16
Discharged home living alone	—	—	2	—	—	—	1
Discharged to hostel for ex-patients	—	—	—	—	1	5	—
Death	34	25	32	33	58	33	26

No data are available centrally on the non-admission of new patients. The data in the table do not include transfers to other hospitals.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Stealing from Shops

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and how many women, respectively, have been charged with stealing from shops during each of the past 10 years for which records are available; how many and what percentage of such persons have pleaded guilty and not guilty, respectively; how many and what percentage have been found guilty; and how many and what percentage of the trials of such persons who have been found guilty and not guilty, respectively, were before magistrates courts and on indictment, respectively.

Mr. Hurd: Information on the numbers found guilty or acquitted for offences of theft from shops are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables", copies of which are in the Library, in table S1.1(A) of volume 1 for proceedings at magistrates' courts, and table S2.1(A), for proceedings at the Crown Court, under offence classification 46. Reliable information on pleas is not available.

Carlisle

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria as to how many crimes have been reported in the Carlisle city sub-division for each year since 1977.

Mr. Hurd: The information that is collected centrally is of numbers of notifiable offences recorded in each police force area. These are published each year in Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—tables 2.4 to 2.7 of the issue for 1986—(Cm. 233), a copy of which is in the Library.

Speeding

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for speeding there have been of drivers of *(a)* coaches, *(b)* lorries and *(c)* private cars in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hurd: No reliable information is available for specific types of vehicle. The available information relates to findings of guilt for all speed limit offences and is published annually in the Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales" — table 7 of issue 36/87. Further details are published in supplementary tables to this bulletin—table 5 of the issue for 1985. Copies of both publications are in the Library; the issue for 1986 will be published very shortly. In order to reduce the burden on the police of statistical collection, as from 1 January 1987 these further details ceased to be collected.

Lindholme Prison

Mr. Michael Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to implement the August 1987 review of manpower at Her Majesty's prison Lindholme; and if he will make it his policy that no increase in the number of prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Lindholme will take place until after that date.

Mr. Hurd: This review is part of the process of implementing fresh start. Consultation is still in hand, and implementation will take place as soon as agreement is reached. We can make no commitment as to the number of prisoners accommodated, which will depend in part on changes in the prison population.

Firearms

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotgun licences and firearm certificates were issued within the Easington constituency within the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information available centrally on the issue of shotgun and firearm certificates relates to individual police force areas. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 5 November at columns *827-8*.

DNA Testing

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funds his Department has provided for the work of Professor Alec Jeffreys at Leicester university on DNA testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Department has not funded Professor Jeffreys for his work on DNA profiling. We have, however, agreed to pay him £2,500 for his assistance with pilot trials involving DNA testing in immigration cases.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refusals of entry clearance there have been for each year since 1983 in each of the five countries for which visa requirements apply; what is the current average delay between refusal of an application and the decision on an appeal against refusal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information available centrally is given in the table. Information on entry clearance applications in Nigeria in 1983-86 is not available. Nor is information available on the delay between a refusal of entry clearance and the appeal being listed for hearing.

Table 1
Persons refused initially[1] and entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Year	*Bangladesh*	*India*	*Pakistan*	*Ghana*
1983	5,820	1,670	2,320	n.a.
1984	4,270	1,250	1,860	n.a.
1985	4,900	1,160	1,680	n.a.
1986	3,680	1,760	2,150	[2]480

n.a. Not available.
[1] Including those subsequently successful on appeal.
[2] October to December only.

Table 2
Expected time between date appellant's representative indicates readiness to proceed[1] and hearing of appeal

Hearing centre	*Number of months*
Central London	1·5
Birmingham	2·0
Harmondsworth	3·5
Leeds	2·0
Manchester	3·0
Southampton	1·0
Scotland	7·0

[1] In many instances the appellant's representative in the United Kingdom is not ready to proceed for a considerable period due to the necessity to obtain full instructions from the appellant overseas.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social Fund

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the proposed operation and role of the housing benefit scheme when the new social fund regulations come into effect in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: For information on the operation and role of the housing benefit scheme, I refer the hon. Member to

the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled during the debate in the House on the Housing Benefit regulations on 19 November at columns 1241-50. In general the reformed housing benefit scheme will not be affected by the operation of the social fund. Housing benefit will continue to be a passport to social fund funeral payments and local authorities will therefore be asked to confirm in a small percentage of cases that housing benefit is in payment.

NHS Pay

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the amount of expenditure to be met by *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the National Health Service as a result of the national pay awards for National Health Service workers which have been agreed for the current financial year.

Mr. Newton: For the review body awards for staff working in the hospital and community health services the information requested is as follows:

	£ million (England)
Estimated cost	488
Cost covered by allocations to health authorities	464
Difference to be met by authorities from their cost improvement programmes	24

Pay increases of around 5 per cent. have been agreed for a number of non-review body staff groups. Others have yet to settle. Authorities will be expected to meet the cost of these awards from the resources available to them, including resources released by their cost-improvement programmes.

St. Ann's Hospital, Tottenham

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of nursing posts at St. Ann's hospital in Tottenham are currently unfilled; and if he will make a statement about what the Government are doing to resolve the shortage of nurses at St. Ann's and other hospitals which are similarly affected.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of Haringey health authority for the local information he seeks.

This Government established the independent review body for nursing and midwifery staff and have implemented all four reports of that body. Since 1979, nurses' pay has increased by about 30 per cent. in real terms.

Health authorities, which are responsible for recruitment, have been asked to improve recruitment and retention by increasing male recruitment, making greater efforts to recruit mature entrants, organise "back to nursing" campaigns including refresher training, establish nurse banks and give more opportunities for flexible working arrangements, part-time working and job sharing. They have also been asked to make the best use of available staff by better matching of staff to work loads and better deployment, more use of performance indicators, review their skill mix, provide better support for trained staff and more use of five-day wards.

Current central activities include consultations on new nurse training proposals (Project 2000) of which one aim is to improve recruitment and retention; a feasibility study on the use of YTS as a means of training support workers in nursing and other professions and possibly provide for some an avenue to nurse training; a joint NHS/DHSS working group on equal opportunities for women which is aiming to find better ways of retaining existing staff; the nursing and midwifery staff negotiating council are reviewing the nursing clinical grading structure with the aim of making a more flexible structure which can recognise individual skills and responsibility; the regional health authority chairmen have commissioned a study to examine factors influencing recruitment and retention and suggest improvements; and a career development project group has been set up to examine the scope for more attractive career goals for nurses.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the proposal to close two operating theatres at St. Ann's hospital, Tottenham; when the theatres were opened; and at what cost.

Mrs. Currie: This is a local matter and the hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of Haringey health authority for the information he seeks.

North East Thames Region (Expenditure)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the 1986-87 half-yearly overspend-underspend position of the North East Thames region, broken down into districts.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of North East Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a copy of the statement issued by all chairmen of the district health authorities in the North East Thames regional health authority on 11 November on the regional health authority's financial difficulties and the need for extra funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received a copy of the statement from the chairman of North East Thames regional health authority. We expect to meet a group of chairmen from the region soon when this will be one of the subjects on the agenda.

Population

Sir William Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in order of percentage change the increase or decrease in population in the United Kingdom between 1957 and 1981, broken down by counties, as they existed prior to 1 April 1972 where appropriate, with the relevant percentage changes for the United Kingdom, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, respectively.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost. However, census figures for 1961 and 1981 for counties within England and Wales and for the regions and Island areas of Scotland provide a good approximation. These figures are given in the table.

County	Population present on Census night[1]		Difference 1961-81	
	1961	1981	Absolute	Percentage
United Kingdom	52,708,934	55,773,499	3,064,565	5·8
England	43,460,525	46,362,836	2,902,311	6·7
Wales	2,644,023	2,791,851	147,828	5·6
Scotland	5,179,344	5,130,735	−48,609	−0·9
Northern Ireland	1,425,042	1,488,077	63,035	4·4
Shetland Islands	17,812	27,277	9,465	53·1
Buckinghamshire	377,994	567,979	189,985	50·3
West Sussex	492.051	661,847	169,796	34·5
Essex	1,103,616	1,474,300	370,684	33·6
Northamptonshire	398,057	528,448	130,391	32.8
Cambridgeshire	436,555	578,734	142,179	32·6
Bedfordshire	382,706	507,054	124,348	32·5
Berkshire	516,825	681,226	164,401	31·8
Oxfordshire	402,902	519,490	116,588	28·9
Hereford and Worcester	491,887	631,756	139,869	28.4
Suffolk	467,130	598,335	131,205	28·1
Hampshire	1,150,653	1,466,385	315,732	27·4
Cheshire	729,779	929,981	200,202	27.4
Shropshire	297,742	375,715	77,973	26·2
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	343,278	432,240	88,962	25·9
Isle of Wight	95,752	118,594	22,842	23·9
Somerset	345,462	427,114	81,652	23·6
Warwickshire	386,752	476,315	89,563	23·2
Norfolk	565,915	694,566	128,651	22·7
Wiltshire	422,950	518,545	95,595	22·6
Kent	1,198,564	1,467,619	269,055	22·4
Highland	163,893	200,150	36,257	22·1
Hertfordshire	787,850	956,517	168,667	21·4
Clwyd	322,296	391,081	68,785	21·3
Leicestershire	706,153	844,525	138,372	19·6
Staffordshire	849,365	1,015,620	166,255	19·6
Dorset	499,721	595,415	95,694	19·1
Gloucestershire	426,254	501,673	75,419	17·7
Lincolnshire	468,657	550,758	82,101	17·5
Devon	822,699	958,745	136,046	16·5
North Yorkshire	575,255	666,951	91,696	15·9
East Sussex	586,230	657,248	71,018	12·1
Central	244,620	273,391	28,771	11·8
Surrey	905,530	1,004,332	98,802	10·9
Avon	828,953	915,176	86,223	10·4
Nottinghamshire	900,989	985,283	84,294	9·4
Northumberland	274,315	299,484	25,169	9·2
Lancashire	1,261,188	1,376,519	115,331	9·1
Powys	102,260	110,555	8,295	8·1
Cleveland	526,497	567,958	41,461	7·9
Gwynedd	213,719	230,048	16,329	7·6
Derbyshire	846,807	910,173	63,366	7·5
Grampian	440,351	471,942	31,591	7·2
Humberside	797,083	852,420	55,337	6·9
Dyfed	315,780	330,178	14,398	4·6
Lothian	710,163	738,372	28,209	4.0
Gwent	423,883	439,875	15,992	3·8
Mid Glamorgan	519,472	538,474	19,002	3·7
Cumbria	470,130	487,038	16,908	3·6
Fife	320,692	327,362	6,670	2·1
Orkney Islands	18,747	19,056	309	1·6
West Yorkshire	2,005,434	2,037,165	31,731	1·6
South Glamorgan	380,267	384,042	3,775	1·0
West Glamorgan	366,346	367,598	1,252	·3
Durham	605,263	607,198	1,935	·3
South Yorkshire	1,303,300	1,303,948	648	·0
Dumfries and Galloway	146,434	145,139	−1,295	−·9
Tayside	397,820	391,846	−5,974	−1·5
Western Isles	32,609	31,884	−725	−2.2
Borders	102,232	99,784	−2,448	−2·4
West Midlands	2,731,892	2,648,939	−82,953	−3·0
Greater Manchester	2,719,913	2,595,753	−124,160	−4·6
Strathclyde	2,583,971	2,404,532	−179,439	−6.9
Tyne and Wear	1,243,848	1,142,675	−101,173	−8.1
Merseyside	1,718,186	1,511,915	−206,271	−12·0
Greater London	7,992,443	6,713,165	−1,279,278	−16·0

[1] Excluding allowance for underenumeration.

NHS Consultants (Merit Awards)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of merit awards to National Health Service consultants in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 24 November at column *163*.

Family Planning

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of patients registered with general practitioners for National Health Service contraceptive services in England in 1986;

(2) how many general practitioners are registered to provide a National Health Service family planning service to their patients in England; and how many premises are involved.

Mr. Newton: In 1986 approximately 2·5 million women received contraceptive services from general medical practitioners in England. At 1 October 1986, 23,928 general medical practitioners in England under contract with family practitioner committees provided contraceptive services.

I regret that information as to how many premises were involved is not held centrally.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost of the general practitioner provision for National Health Service family planning services to patients for 1986 in England.

Mr. Newton: The total cost of family planning services provided by general practitioners in England is estimated to have been some £48 million in 1986-87. This includes fees paid to general practitioners and the cost of drugs, but excludes practice expenses directly reimbursed to general practitioners.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a table showing the fees claimed per patient per year from the National Health Service centrally by general practitioners for providing each of the available contraceptive methods;

(2) if the fees claimed from the National Health Service centrally by general practitioners for providing each of the available contraceptive methods per patient per year are standard for all areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: The fees payable to general medical practitioners for the provision of contraceptive services under the National Health Service are published in the "Statement of Fees and Allowances Payable to General Medical Practitioners in England and Wales". Copies of the statement are held in the Library.

The fees represent payment for services provided over the course of 12 months. The intrauterine device fee (£33.15) is payable where the doctor inserts the device and gives any necessary after care. The ordinary fee (£9.90) is payable for the provision of all other types of contraceptive services including any necessary after care. These fees are standard for all areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for each year since 1979 showing the comparative cost of providing family planning services by general practitioners and family planning clinics per patient per year.

Mr. Tony Newton: Figures are not available to allow costs to be given on a comparable basis.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for each year since 1979 showing the number of people receiving family planning services from (a) general practitioners and (b) family planning clinics.

Mr. Newton: The figures are contained in the table which relates to England only.

	Patients seen by health authority family planning services (clinic and domiciliary) ('000s)	*Estimated number of patients receiving contraceptive services from General Medical Practitioners ('000s)*
1979	1510·3	1921·8
1980	1509·8	2023·9
1981	1488·9	2091·5
1982	1477·5	2190·6
1983	1485·4	2358·1
1984	1524·0	2374·4
1985	1493·9	2455·8
1986	1446·3	2571·0

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to refrain from imposing charges for family planning services: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 26 October at column *157*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why family planning services were not included in the White Paper on primary health care (Cm. 249); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no proposals for changes related specifically to family planning, though our plans to improve the responsiveness of primary care provision generally to consumer needs should benefit those using family planning services provided by general practitioners.

Rating Reform

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects *(a)* the necessary operational details of the proposed community charge rebate scheme to be available and *(b)* sufficient data to be available centrally to set up the appropriate models to determine the parameters of the poverty traps which would be created by the proposed community charge; and whether he will specify the main aspects of the proposed community charge rebate scheme which have yet to be decided.

Mr. Scott: We hope to publish draft community charge rebate regulations in the spring or early summer of 1988, following consultation with the local authority associations. Information on the effects of the rebate scheme will not be available until further decisions have been made.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of homosexuals presenting themselves for treatment at sexually transmitted disease clinics in London is found to be HIV positive.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects his Department to be in a position to make estimates of the number of AIDS infections in the United Kingdom in 1991.

Mr. Newton: A group of experts is currently looking at the monitoring and surveillance of HIV infection and AIDS and will be making recommendations on how present systems can be improved. It is hoped that the improvements will produce better data which can be used as a basis for forecasting numbers of future cases.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the relative concentration of the HIV virus in the various body fluids of infected persons.

Mr. Newton: HIV can be detected in some infected individuals in a variety of body fluids. Precise quantification is not possible, although it is apparent that even in the same individual the reliability with which virus can be isolated can vary from time to time. Those fluids which commonly contain enough virus to transmit infection are blood, semen and vaginal fluid.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent his Departmemt uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available. Paper products are procured through Her Majesty's Stationery Office which obtains the most suitable materials at the best possible price. If it is appropriate to purchase items with a recycled paper content Her Majesty's Stationery Office will do so on the Department's behalf. Some paper waste is disposed of to contractors who make material available for recycling, but figures are not available.

Hexachlorophene

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the maximum permitted concentration of 2,3,6,7—tetrachloro-dibenzo dioxin in the antiseptic hexachlorophene.

Mr. Newton: The licensing authority for medicines has undertakings that hexachlorophane used in the preparation of medicinal products contains no more than 15 parts per 1,000 million of 2,3,6,7 tetrachloro-dibenzo dioxin.

Drugs

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual National Health Service net expenditure on drugs; what proportion is estimated to be attributable to the drugs manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statememt.

Mr. Newton: Expenditure on drugs in the National Health Service in England in 1986-87, including fees and remuneration, was £1,957 million. It is not possible to apportion this amount among remuneration, the manufacturing and the distribution industries.

Benefit Adjudication Officers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit adjudication officers have less than six months experience of adjudication work; how many are also section supervisors; and if he will provide this information separately for each of the former metropolitan county areas and for Greater London.

Mr. Portillo: Statistics are not collected on the information requested. It is regretted therefore that the information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, what were the total numbers of disallowances of unemployment benefit made by the adjudication officers at each benefit office in Newcastle upon Tyne for each year since 1980, broken down by reasons for disallowance that permit reconciliation with the summaries in the annual analysis of decisions of adjudication officers.

Mr. Portillo: Adjudication work for unemployment benefit in Newcastle upon Tyne and district is centralised and covers six offices in Newcastle and eight outside. The available information for this group which cannot be broken down further is:

Reasons for disallowance	*Numbers of disallowance made by Newcastle upon Tyne adjudication officer*		
	1983	*1985*	*1986*
All questions	14,674	19,487	20,807
Capability	111	208	251
Employment not terminated	—	—	—
Engaged in employment	2,510	2,858	2,503
Employed to full normal extent	355	1,140	1,467
Normal idle day	22	28	46
Payment in lieu of notice or wages etc.	2,670	3,511	3,467
Recognised or customary holiday	57	94	123
Whether unemployed	866	1,338	1,668
Share fishermen			
work as	12	3	15
no work available	5	—	—
Dependants benefit			
child	125	13	5
adult	79	160	150
Delayed claim	2,063	2,453	3,142
Failure to attend for interview	15	1	2
Failure to keep to signing time	—	1	1
Occupational pensioners	2	1	2
Availability	696	945	1,356
Restricted availability	33	43	80
Share fishermen—neglect to avail	—	2	—
Trade dispute	2	9	—
Seasonal workers	43	87	76
Leaving voluntarily	3,397	4,581	4,234
Misconduct	906	1,287	1,292
Employment			
neglect to avail	2	2	2
refusal of	10	21	30
Refusal or premature termination of training	51	5	38
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	2	—	—

Reasons for disallowance	Numbers of disallowance made by Newcastle upon Tyne adjudication officer 1983	1985	1986
Restart	—	—	2
Other questions	612	696	855

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list and name the number of doctors who performed abortions at 18 weeks and after in licensed clinics and nursing homes in 1986 according to the following bands, performed *(a)* one to five abortions, *(b)* five to 50 abortions, *(c)* 50 to 100 abortions and *(d)* over 100 abortions.

Mr. Newton: No. Information on individual doctors is not released for reasons of maintaining confidentiality, and is not recorded on the abortion computer files.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by each district health authority, the cost of abortions in money and as a percentage of all Health Service expenditure, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The accounts submitted by the health authorities to the Department do not show separately the amount spent on abortion and I regret therefore that I am unable to provide the information requested.

NHS (Administrative Staff)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many administrative staff are currently employed in the Health Service; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 30 November at column *443*.

Cytopathology

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of cytopathology records in England are held on *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual records; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will show, for the 12-month period to 30 June, the decisions of adjudication officers on doubtful fresh claims, renewal claims and reviewed claims for unemployment benefit giving the numbers allowed, disallowed, referred to a local tribunal, revised in favour of claimants, revised adversely to claimants and not revised in the following categories of questions: *(a)* employed to full normal extent, *(b)* engaged in employment, *(c)* availability, *(d)* restricted availability, *(e)* leaving voluntarily, *(f)* for misconduct, *(g)* neglecting to avail of employment, *(h)* refusal of employment, *(i)* refusal or premature termination of training, *(j)* refusal to carry out written recommendations, and *(k)* Restart.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is shown in the table:

Category of question	All decisions	Fresh or renewal claims			Reviewed claims		Not revised
		Allowed	Disallowed	Referred to local tribunal	Revised in favour of claimant	Revised adversely to claimant	
Employed to full extent normal	99,915	65,373	33,100	284	313	587	258
Engaged in employment	64,776	6,538	48,736	38	523	8451	490
Availability	148,868	69,641	74,149	185	1,661	1,847	1,385
Restricted availability	44,297	31,957	11,489	31	305	219	296
Leaving voluntarily	516,811	192,643	315,705	358	4,659	976	2,470
Misconduct	197,168	96,749	97,785	724	949	343	618
Neglect to avail	3,593	2,052	1,459	4	34	23	21
Refusal of employment	7,208	5,054	2,042	2	73	18	9
Refusal or premature termination of training	9,557	3,433	5,683	12	176	139	14
Refusal to carry out written recommendation	109	21	49	7	17	13	2
Restart	1,335	246	863	1	14	54	157

Fluoridation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, what funds were allocated for the purposes of water fluoridation in 1986 and 1987; and how much will be allocated for 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Currie: The central funds allocated to English health authorities to assist in the implementation of water fluoridation schemes amounted to £262,000 in 1986-87 and £433,000 in 1987-88. As stated in the Government's White Paper "Promoting Better Health" it is intended to increase further the amount of money to fund schemes in the future. The allocations for the financial year 1988-89 will be made shortly.

Heart Surgery (Children)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply of Monday 30 November,

to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, he will make it his practice to collect information on the number of children waiting for heart surgery.

Mr. Newton: Waiting list statistics are assembled at three-monthly intervals, and relate to the number of patients waiting on a particular day. For relatively small groups, where the position could fluctuate greatly from day to day, such figures would mean little. I therefore think it is right to continue to collect figures centrally by specialty, not by individual condition.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give *(a)* the number of supplementary benefit recipients and *(b)* the number of elderly people in receipt of supplementary pensions from each of the local offices servicing Edinburgh for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The table sets out the information requested for each of the five local offices which serve Edinburgh.

All supplementary benefit cases

	City	*East*	*North*	*South*	*West*	*Total*
7 August 1979	6,075	6,613	6,142	5,864	6,043	30,737
5 August 1980	6,223	6,933	6,224	5,909	6,576	31,865
5 August 1981	7,426	8,038	6,943	6,894	7,440	36,741
3 August 1982	9,078	9,315	7,865	8,766	8,508	43,532
2 August 1983	9,979	9,503	8,284	9,684	9,242	46,692
31 July 1984	10,806	10,263	8,639	10,306	9,856	49,870
31 July 1985	11,514	10,692	9,099	11,100	19,350	52,761
13 August 1986	12,203	10,861	9,870	10,821	11,050	54,805
28 July 1987	13,736	11,540	10,796	11,192	11,655	58,919
			Supplementary pensioners			
7 August 1979	2,418	2,735	2,844	2,343	2,856	13,196
5 August 1980	2,302	2,735	2,689	2,315	2,867	12,908
5 August 1981	2,341	2,809	2,663	2,421	2,904	13,138
3 August 1982	2,395	2,929	2,660	2,557	2,991	13,532
2 August 1983	2,196	2,612	2,496	2,538	2,951	12,793
31 July 1984	2,205	2,948	2,529	2,657	2,900	13,239
31 July 1985	2,355	3,239	2,543	2,899	2,955	13,991
13 August 1986	2,207	3,175	2,454	2,853	2,798	13,487
28 July 1987	2,221	3,709	2,523	3,033	2,949	14,435

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Swiss Cheese

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much Vacherin Mont D'Or cheese which he believes may be contaminated has been imported into the United Kingdom from Switzerland.

Mrs. Currie: The Swiss "Vacherin Mont D'Or" is a seasonally produced cheese (October to December) and, I understand, is imported into this country in small quantities. It is estimated that no more than 30 or 40 kgs of this season's production reached this country before the Swiss authorities stopped production and export. It was because of the uncertainty over the volume of sales in this country that we decided to issue a general warning to the public on 25 November concerning listeriosis.

NHS Employees (Press Statements)

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the freedom with which National Health Service employees may speak to the press on matters of patient care; and if he will dismiss any health authority chairman found to have threatened employees with dismissal if they speak to the press on matters relating to patient care.

Mr. Newton: Unless specifically forbidden by their employment contract or terms and conditions of service, National Health Service employees are free to speak to the press on matters concerning the National Health Service including matters of patient care in general. Medical information relating to an individual patient should not be disclosed without the patient's consent. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind perhaps he would care to write to me about it.

Dependants (Benefit)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he has done to ensure that arrears are paid to those people affected by the commissioner's decision which held that an increase of social security benefit can be paid in respect of a non-working dependant with an occupational pension.

Mr. Scott: We have carefully considered the implications of the commissioner's decision which brought to light inconsistencies in the provisions in the Social Security Act 1975 governing dependency increases paid with social security benefits and subject to an earnings rule. We propose to remove these inconsistencies by clause 9 in the Social Security Bill now before the House. Where records of previous claims can be readily identified and show that a dependency increase was wrongly disallowed the appropriate arrears will be paid. We estimate however that we shall be unable to trace about 1,000 wrongly decided claims. The Department will be writing in the next few days to those who represent the interests of occupational pensioners with a request that those affected are alerted to their possible entitlement to a payment of arrears.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of funding to the Mersey regional health authority in each of the last eight years expressing year-on-year changes as a percentage in both cash and real terms.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The table shows the percentage growth in gross revenue expenditure between 1978-79 and 1986-87 — the latest year for which outturn data are available.

Percentage growth in gross revenue expenditure[1] Mersey RHA

	Cash	Real terms[2]
1978-79 to 1979-80	20·8	1·00
1979-80 to 1980-81	28·3	1·01
1980-81 to 1981-82	10·4	1·09
1981-82 to 1982-83	7·1	1·04
1982-83 to 1983-84	4·7	0·1
1983-84 to 1984-85	5·9	1·4
1984-85 to 1985-86	5·1	−0·9
1985-86 to 1986-87	6·9	3·7

[1] Based on health authorities' summarised accounts, figures for 1986-87 are provisional.
[2] As measured by the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

Health Districts (Funding)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of funding for *(a)* the Crewe, *(b)* the Chester and *(c)* the Halton health districts in each of the last eight years, expressing year-on-year changes as a percentage in both cash and real terms.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The table shows the percentage growth in gross revenue expenditure between 1982-83 and 1986-87 the latest year for which outturn data are available. District level information is not available prior to 1982-83.

Percentage growth in gross revenue expenditure[1]

	Chester		Crewe		Halton	
	Cash	Real terms[2]	Cash	Real terms[2]	Cash	Real terms[2]
1982-83 to 1983-84	6·3	1·6	6·1	1·4	7·5	2·8
1983-84 to 1984-85	3·7	−0·7	6·2	1·8	5·9	1·4
1984-85 to 1985-86	1·9	−3·9	5·3	−0·7	36·9	29·1
1985-86 to 1986-87	6·5	3·4	7·2	4·1	15·7	12·3

[1] Figures are based on health authorities' summarised accounts; figures for 1986-87 are provisional.
[2] As measured by the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

Health Districts (Medical Staff)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* nurses were employed in (i) the Crewe, (ii) the Chester and (iii) the Halton health districts in each of the last eight years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* Such information as is available centrally is shown in the table. I am sorry that I am unable to provide all the information requested.

Figures for doctors and dentists in Crewe, Chester and Halton health authorities, which formed part of the Cheshire area health authority before the NHS reorganisation, are not centrally available prior to 1982.

From 1982 we have figures for all doctors and dentists employed in the district health authorities except for senior registrars and consultants, whose contracts are held by the regional health authority. The district health authority where those staff work cannot be identified centrally. There will therefore be more doctors and dentists working in the Crewe, Chester and Halton health authorities than are accounted for in the table.

Figures for non-medical staff are not available prior to 1982 on a comparable basis with those for later years due to the effects of the 1982 National Health Service reorganisation in the Cheshire area health authority.

NHS directly employed Medical/Dental and Nursing/Midwifery Staff 30 September each year

District Health Authority	Year	Whole-time equivalent[1] Medical and Dental[2]	Nursing and Midwifery[3]
Crewe	1982	97	1,679
	1983	98	1,724
	1984	98	1,759
	1985	100	1,813
	1986	89	1,794
Chester	1982	106	1,754
	1983	104	1,782
	1984	113	1,733
	1985	111	1,740
	1986	109	1,744
Halton	1982	24	460
	1983	27	442
	1984	24	416
	1985	38	568
	1986	39	604

Source: DHSS (SR7) Annual Censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.
[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.
[2] Includes permanent paid, honarary and locum staff in hospitals and community health services.
[3] Includes agency staff.

District Health Authorities (Hospitals)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority, and for each year since 1979 *(a)* hospitals closed temporarily, the duration of the closure and the numbers of beds suspended, *(b)* hospitals which have been reopened within one year after temporary closure and *(c)* hospitals which have been reopened after one year of temporary closure.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* Information about temporary closures is not held centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Clinics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a date for the publication of the tables giving independent sector hospitals, nursing homes and clinics as recorded on form SBH212 (number of nursing staff) for 1986.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The tables summarising form SBH212 at national, regional and district levels are expected to be published in January 1988. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Arrowe Park Hospital, Wirral

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will order an inquiry into the alleged fight between two consultants in an operating theatre at Arrowe Park hospital, Wirral, on 27 November, with the findings being made public.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The alleged incident at Arrowe Park hospital is being investigated by Mersey regional health authority in accordance with recognised disciplinary procedures and it is for that authority to decide what action, if any, should be taken.

Homeless Children (Medical Records)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department takes to ensure the maintenance of complete medical records of *(a)* homeless children and *(b)* homeless children temporarily housed outside their original health authority.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* Responsibility for medical records rests with the health authorities concerned.

West Midlands RHA (Capital Allocation)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of the capital allocation agreed by the West Midlands regional health authority between April 1986 and May 1987 for each of the district health authorities, together with when each of these proposals are due to come on stream, and the current postponement for each such schemes.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the allocation of capital resources to district health authorities and the management of building schemes contained in its operational capital programme. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for the information she requires.

DHSS Local Offices

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will supply figures for staffing levels in his Department's local offices in the Bristol area, listing vacancies by grade.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The latest available information regarding the numbers of staff in post at social security local offices relates to 1 December 1987. For the offices in the Bristol area this is as follows:

	Number
Bristol Central ILO	179
Bristol East ILO	220
Bristol South ILO	208
Bristol West ILO	129
Horfield ILO	92·5

On 1 December 1987 staff vacancies at these offices were as follows:

	Numbers
Bristol Central ILO	0
Bristol East ILO	1
Telephonist	1
Part-Time Local Officer	1
Bristol South ILO	0
Bristol West ILO	0
Horfield ILO	1
Local Officer	2

Note: ILO = Integrated Local Office.

Private Hospitals (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what conditions have been imposed on the Government money which has been given to private hospitals in Leicester; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much public money his Department has given to the Leicester clinic, a private hospital in Leicester, since 1979;

(3) how much Government money has been given to private hospitals in the Leicester city area in 1986 and 1987, to date.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* It is for district health authorities to decide on the extent to which they make use of their allocated budgets to enter into contractual arrangements with private health sector institutions for the treatment of NHS patients. Detailed information requested is not available centrally.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS (Statistics)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is *(a)* the total number and *(b)* the percentage of YTS sponsors who contract-out their training, at the latest available date and at equivalent dates for each year since the scheme started.

Mr. Cope: The surveys of YTS providers conducted in June-August 1984 and January-February 1986 provide estimates of the numbers of schemes in which any or all of the off-the-job training is contracted out and of the proportions they represent of all YTS schemes. This information is:

Schemes with off-the-job training contracted out

	1984 survey	*Per cent.*	*1986 survey*	*Per cent.*
Some or all contracted out	4,100	(71)	4,100	(74)
All contracted out	1,400	(24)	1,300	(24)

Lost Working Days

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost through strikes in October 1987; and what were the comparable figures in October 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in October 1987 is not yet available. The latest month for which figures are available is September 1987 in which 45,000 working days are provisionally recorded as lost. The comparable figures in September and October 1978 were 878,000 and 1,857,000 respectively.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution the enterprise allowance scheme has made to the falls in unemployment and increased self employment since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began in 1982, more than 300,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own business. During that period the number of self-employed people has risen from 2·2 million to 2·7 million. The scheme has contributed substantially both to the fall in unemployment and the increase in self-employment.

Community Programme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment of the entrants to the community programme in the 12 months to (i) April 1986, (ii) July 1986, (iii) October 1986, (iv) December 1986, (v) April 1987, (vi) July 1987, and (vii) October 1987, what proportions were *(a)* full-time places, *(b)* men, *(c)* single, *(d)* aged over 25 years, *(e)* unemployed for over 12 months and *(f)* former benefit claimants.

Mr. Cope: The figures requested are as shown in the table.

Percentage of Entrants

In the 12 months to:	*Full-time*	*Male*	*Single*	*Aged Over 25 Years*	*Unemployed for Over 12 Months*	*Former Benefit Claimant*[1]
(i) April 1986	15	78	79	34	57	96
(ii) July 1986	14	77	79	35	57	96
(iii) October 1986	13	76	79	36	58	96
(iv) December 1986	13	76	79	37	58	96
(v) April 1987	13	75	79	39	60	96
(vi) July 1987	12	75	78	40	60	96
(vii) October 1987	12	74	76	41	60	97

[1] Directly in receipt of an appropriate benefit.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Michael Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will, using figures from the 1987 labour force survey, publish a table for each Great Britain region and Greater London, by male and female and claimant status, the numbers of people who had looked for a job in the four-week reference period and were available to start work within two weeks;

(2) if he will show, from the 1987 labour force survey, by region including Greater London and by male and female, the numbers of people who were *(a)* without jobs and who looked for work in the four weeks before their labour force survey interview and were available to start work within two weeks, who wanted full-time jobs, the number who wanted part-time jobs and the number who had no preference, *(b)* unemployed according to the standard labour force survey definition who were looking for full-time jobs and the number looking for part-time jobs and the number who had no preference, *(c)* in part-time jobs who were looking for a different job with longer hours or looking for an additional job, *(d)* looking for a different job with shorter hours, *(e)* claimants not unemployed by the definition using broad International Labour Organisation guidelines on the grounds that they were employed, and *(f)* claimants not unemployed by the conventional labour force survey definition on the grounds that they were employed;

(3) if he will show, from the 1987 labour force survey by region including Greater London and by male and female, the number of people not counted as unemployed by the definition using broad International Labour Organisation guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for a job in the four weeks prior to interview, but who stated that they would like a job if one was available, and *(a)* were available to start work within two weeks and *(b)* were not available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Cope: Results of the 1987 labour force survey are not yet available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in each parliamentary constituency at the most recently available date, how many unemployed claimants were *(a)* aged under 25 years, *(b)* aged under 25 years and unemployed for 12 months or more, and *(c)* of all ages and unemployed for 12 months or more.

Mr. Cope: I am sending the hon. Member the requested information, which is also available in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 25, those aged under 25 and unemployed for 12 months or more and those of all ages who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, at 8 October 1987.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show by region, including Greater London, and by male and female, the number of self-employed people in June 1979, June 1983, June 1984, June 1985, June 1986 and June 1987, and by similar categories, the number of people in the working population in June 1979, June 1983, June 1984, June 1985, June 1986 and June 1987.

Mr. Cope: The available information is as follows:

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1979
(thousands)

	Self employed		*Civilian working population*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
South East	544	107	5,020	3,345
Greater London[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Anglia	64	15	502	308
South West	111	35	1,093	734
West Midlands	124	17	1,542	951
East Midlands	99	17	1,064	676

	Self employed		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Yorkshire and Humberside	107	27	1,380	873
North West	161	53	1,831	1,240
North	61	16	881	554
Wales	98	26	769	462
Scotland	128	32	1,445	984

[1] Included in South East.
n/a Not available other than for Census of Employment dates before 1981.

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1983 (thousands)

	Self employed		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
South East	567	163	5,058	3,443
Greater London[1]	220	60	2,452	1,631
East Anglia	72	22	526	330
South West	161	52	1,138	764
West Midlands	137	40	1,517	949
East Midlands	127	30	1,076	688
Yorkshire and Humberside	130	39	1,349	869
North West	163	61	1,747	1,203
North	64	27	829	536
Wales	94	32	722	454
Scotland	137	42	1,421	981

[1] Included in South East.

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1984 (thousands)

	Self employed		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
South East	647	211	5,143	3,613
Greater London[1]	256	73	2,482	1,674
East Anglia	83	26	540	347
South West	171	62	1,154	800
West Midlands	129	36	1,519	968
East Midlands	129	38	1,076	720
Yorkshire and Humberside	159	44	1,357	894
North West	183	74	1,741	1,231
North	73	19	828	546
Wales	108	36	728	465
Scotland	145	40	1,416	999

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1985 (thousands)

	Self employed		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
South East	686	217	5,228	3,714
Greater London[1]	280	80	2,514	1,697
East Anglia	86	28	563	365
South West	186	65	1,182	824
West Midlands	145	40	1,526	999
East Midlands	124	33	1,120	747
Yorkshire and Humberside	162	61	1,365	935
North West	193	75	1,743	1,253
North	79	26	844	566
Wales	111	34	730	465
Scotland	151	49	1,431	1,019

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1986 (thousands)

	Self employed		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
South East	667	238	5,213	3,816
Greater London[1]	260	86	2,497	1,725
East Anglia	81	24	576	374
South West	193	63	1,182	838
West Midlands	144	43	1,527	1,020
East Midlands	127	40	1,118	767
Yorkshire and Humberside	163	53	1,374	942
North West	196	71	1,715	1,259
North	79	25	843	579
Wales	120	34	727	462
Scotland	165	40	1,430	1,014

Self employment and civilian working population at June 1987 (thousands)

	Self employed[2]		Civilian working population	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
South East	687	259	5,200	3,879
Greater London[1]	267	93	2,471	1,735
East Anglia	83	26	591	387
South West	196	66	1,178	851
West Midlands	146	45	1,521	1,031
East Midlands	130	42	1,113	774
Yorkshire and Humberside	170	56	1,366	950
North West	202	75	1,686	1,258
North	82	26	842	570
Wales	126	36	717	462
Scotland	174	43	1,428	1,021

[1] Included in South East.
[2] Provisional.

The civilian working population is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and claimants of unemployment related benefits.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest estimated percentage register effects on the unemployment count of each of the following measures (i) the community programme, (ii) the enterprise allowance scheme, (iii) job release scheme and job splitting scheme, (vi) the new job training scheme, (v) the young workers' scheme and (vi) community industry.

Mr. Cope: The effect on the unemployment count of employment measures cannot be calculated precisely. The people engaged in (ii), (iii) and (v) in the question are all engaged in ordinary work in the mainstream of the economy and have left the unemployment count in the same way as other unemployed people who find a job. The community programme (i) also provides real work for long-term unemployed people. Taking account of this and other factors the best estimates we have of the percentage effect of the employment measures listed is as follows:

Estimated effect on unemployment count (% of those on Schemes)

Employment Measure	Per cent
Community Programme	93
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	32
Job Release Scheme	88
Jobshare[1]	95
New Workers Scheme[2]	28
Community Industry	97

[1] The Jobsplitting Scheme was relaunched as Jobshare on 1 April 1987.
[2] The New Workers Scheme replaced the Young Workers Scheme in April 1986.

The job training scheme is a training programme and not an employment measure.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the currently estimated gross and net costs for each financial year since 1982-83 for the following special employment measures (i) the community programme (ii) the enterprise allowance scheme, (iii) the young workers' scheme, (iv) community industry, (v) the job release scheme and (vi) the job splitting scheme.

Mr. Cope: The gross and net costs are:

Gross Costs (£ million)[1]

	1982-3	*1983-4*	*1984-5*	*1985-6*	*Estimated outturn 1986-7*	*Supply Estimates 1987-8*
Community Programme	155	394	524	667	1,043	1,045
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	2·4	25	79·6	104	143·4	199·3
Young Workers' Scheme[2]	41	58	41	32	—	—
New Workers' Scheme	0	0	0	0	9	18·5
Community Industry	23	24	24	24	26	26·4
Job Release Scheme	211·8	258	280	187	109·5	83·8
Job Splitting Scheme[3]	0·04	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·58	0·770

[1] Gross costs excluding administration costs.
[2] Replaced in April 1986 by the New Workers Scheme.
[3] The Job Splitting Scheme was relaunched as Jobshare on 1 April 1987.

Net Exchequer Costs Per Person no Longer unemployed

	1982-3	*1983-4*	*1984-5*	*1985-6*	*1986-7*	*1987-8*
						forecast
Community Programme	[1]	[1]	1,950	1,950	2,000	2,050
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,600	2,000	2,300
Young Workers' Scheme[2]	[1]	[1]	2,400	1,400	[1]	[1]
New Workers' Scheme	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,300	1,300
Community Industry	[1]	[1]	1,450	1,500	1,550	1,600
Job Release Scheme	[1]	[1]	1,650	1,850	1,850	1,900
Job Splitting Scheme[3]	[1]	[1]	-200	-150	-150	-150

[1] Figures are not available.
[2] Replaced in April 1986 by the New Workers Scheme.
[3] The Job Splitting Scheme was relaunched as Jobshare on 1 April 1987.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for the most recently available date, and in the table form used in column *155, Official Report,* 29 October 1986, if he will show for each Manpower Services Commission region, the number of people interviewed under the restart programme to show the numbers submitted to a job (and those who were employed), submitted to community programme (and those who started), allocated to restart courses (and those started), referred to the new job training scheme (and those started), referred to other training (and those started), referred to job clubs (and those who entered them) and those who agreed to follow up other options including claimant advisers, specialist Manpower Services Commission services and the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: The number of people interviewed under the restart programme, and the numbers referred to the various menu items by region are shown in the table. We do not know how many of those selected for interview are ultimately placed in a job or in a training scheme or programme.

June 1986 to 25 September 1987

	South East	*London*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands*	*Yorks and Humber-side*	*North West*	*Northern*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
Interviews	212,311	271,082	119,612	283,053	212,140	235,253	378,912	182,092	136,283	276,059
Referrals										
Job	19,892	20,479	7,104	22,819	15,859	18,310	34,109	15,215	18,272	29,755
Community Programme	13,445	13,494	8,878	29,816	15,720	27,218	36,883	26,610	19,089	32,314
Restart										
Courses	17,170	22,455	15,498	25,744	21,878	19,764	37,600	24,055	19,847	30,005
New Job Training Scheme	11,665	10,629	6,011	13,852	12,536	13,116	15,175	9,400	5,863	11,913
Other										
Training	17,400	30,170	10,205	37,290	15,639	29,005	40,576	13,133	8,531	19,161
Jobclubs	15,630	21,302	8,797	19,457	14,604	15,368	30,780	14,397	11,833	23,099
Others	79,627	96,399	46,144	84,498	64,883	71,215	111,578	42,596	40,326	83,432

Job Clubs

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in the form provided at columns *39-40, Official Report*, 26 January, what are the characteristics of entrants and leavers to all job clubs shown cumulatively and shown monthly since 5 December 1986; and what are the equivalent figures at the latest available date for internal job clubs run by the Manpower Services Commission and his Department and those of external agents contracted to run job clubs.

Mr. Cope: I am sending the hon. Member the information requested and will place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the accident rates, both fatal and non-fatal in the building and construction industry and in the rest of the manufacturing and construction industry as a whole, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* The table gives the available information for the construction and manufacturing industries from 1981 to 1986-87:

Accident rate (number per 100,000 employees)

Year	Construction		Manufacturing	
	Fatal[1]	Major	Fatal[1]	Major
1981	9·7	155·6	2·1	69·2
1982	9·7	188·5	2·5	72·8
1983	11·6	213·2	2·2	79·9
1984	9·8	225·2	2·7	89·9
1985	10·5	225·8	2·4	93·0
1986-87p[2]	9·2	260·2	2·3	136·7

[1] As defined in the reporting regulations, 1981-1985 (NADOR) and 1986-87 (RIDDOR), the RIDDOR definition is wider than that under NADOR.
(p = provisional).
[2] On 1 April 1986 the basis of HSE's statistics changed from calender to planning (1 April to 31 March) years.

Health and Safety (Prosecutions)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the total number of prosecutions brought by the Health and Safety Executive and the total fines imposed for the building and construction industry and the rest of the manufacturing and construction industry as a whole for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* The table shows the available information for 1981 to 1986-87:

Year	Number of: prosecutions[1]: informations laid		Convictions obtained		Average fine per conviction	
	Manufacturing	Construction	Manufacturing	Construction	Manufacturing	Construction
1981	824	605	730	531	201	218
1982	1,084	856	966	734	265	219
1983	1,023	727	883	651	258	262
1984	1,055	669	938	590	303	345
1985	930	717	847	577	478	433
1986 January to March	225	158	196	128	501	436
1986-87[2]	813	652	727	482	484	517

[1] Data are for prosecutions taken by Factory and Agricultural Inspectorate, and exclude any taken by Local Authorities, the Explosives Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Mines and Quarries Inspectorate, Railway Inspectorate and the Petroleum Engineering Division of the Department of Energy and the Pollution Inspectorate (formerly the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate).
[2] Provisional data for the 12 month period April 1986 to March 1987.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Special Sales

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what special sales have been approved by the management committee of the European Economic Community over the past 12 months; and if he will publish a table showing the amount of each sale, the country to which the food or wine was sent and the sale price in pence per pound.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* At any one time CAP arrangements provide for a number of sales schemes. These tend to follow established patterns, but the following sales to non-EC countries, agreed over the past 12 months, have distinguishing features:

Commodity	Date	Quantity (tonnes)	Country of destination	Sale price p/lb equivalent
Wheat	November 1986	375,000	Algeria/Egypt	[1]2·0
Wheat	September 1987	650,000	USSR	[1]1·6
Wheat	November 1987	975,000	USSR	[1]2·1
Barley	September 1987	850,000	USSR	[1]1·3
Butter	February 1987	35,000	USSR	[2]6·5
Butter	February 1987	65,000	USSR	[2]6·5
Butter	March 1987	181,500	USSR	[2]6·0
Butter	April 1987	18,500	USSR	[2]6·0
Butter	November 1987	200,100	USSR	[2]6·0
Beef	December 1986-November 1987	12,000	Peru	[3]28·2-36·4

[1]The price is calculated from the dollar equivalent of the price actually paid by the purchaser (including MCAs), converted into sterling at the spot rate at the time of the sale.

[2]The price is the actual sale price out of intervention (exclusive of MCAs) and converted into sterling at the green rate.

[3]The price is the sale price (including MCAs) that would have obtained if the beef had been exported from the United Kingdom, which it was not.

Unilever Merger

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications for Government policy towards competition, regional development and regeneration of the inner cities of the decision by Unilever to merge Batchelors plc with Brooke Bond Oxo plc, and to relocate Batchelors headquarters from Sheffield to Croydon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* I am aware of the decision of these two Unilever subsidiary companies to merge, to strengthen their future competitive position and help improve the security of some 4,500 employees countrywide. The choice of location for the joint head office is one for management. I understand that Batchelors Foods has announced that there will be no enforced redundancies before next October, opportunities will be available in the merged business for employees affected by the move, and external counselling will be provided to help find suitable alternative employment in cases of redundancy.

Any consideration of this merger under competition legislation would be a matter in the first place for the Director General of Fair Trading.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the average and total value of grants made under the national agriculture improvement scheme for each county in England and Wales in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many grants were made under the national agriculture improvement scheme in each county in England and Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answers 2 December 1987]:* Grant payments in England and Wales under the national element of the agriculture improvement scheme in the 12 months from November 1986 to October 1987 were as follows:

	£
Average value per payment	1,765
Total value of payments	5,184,000
Number of payments	2,937

I regret that a break down of this information on a county basis is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether grants made under the agriculture improvement scheme are categorised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* The various categories of grant available under the agriculture improvement scheme are set out in the schedules to SI. 1985 No. 1266, the Agriculture Improvement Regulations, and in schedule 1 to SI. 1985 No. 1029, the Agriculture Improvement Scheme.

Salmon (Disease)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any evidence of disease being spread by farmed salmon escaping in British rivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* I have no evidence of any outbreak of fish disease in wild salmon as a result of escaped farmed salmon. The fisheries Departments continue to regard the control of fish diseases very seriously.

Seals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is carrying out into the harmful effects of marine pollution on seals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* The primary responsibility to keep under review the status of United Kingdom seal populations rests with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland under the terms of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970. Advice on these matters is taken from the sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council and I understand that latest surveys indicate that the numbers of seals in United Kingdom waters are being maintained at healthy levels.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

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